

SESSION WEEKLY



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**NEW LEADER, NEW MAJORITY
MEET THE NEW HOUSE MEMBERS
BALLOTS CAST FOR SMOKING BAN**

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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WELCOME TO THE 85TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

There is change in the House of Representatives.

Democrats control the House for the first time in eight years, and for only the second time in the House's history, a woman has been elected speaker.

Now, as the first year of the biennium unfolds, it will be interesting to watch how not only the party shift but also the change in member demographics affect policies, negotiations and demeanor in the House.

Women will play a greater role this session. They now hold 43 seats in the House, the most ever. But also of interest, the average age in the House of Representatives is now 50.2, up from 48.6 in 2005, with 29 members between the ages of 61 and 70. Age ranges haven't been tracked all that long at the House, but this is the greatest number of members in that age group since at least 1991.

The first year of the biennium is traditionally reserved for consideration of the state budget, and the Legislature comes into session looking at a projected \$2 billion surplus. Will that mean new programs, tax cuts, or reinstatement of programs that were cut to balance the budget during last biennium's deficit?

Stay tuned.

The writers, editors and photographers of the award-winning Session Weekly, now in its 24th year, will continue the tradition of bringing to readers nonpartisan coverage of committee and floor action of the Minnesota House of Representatives. We hope you find Session Weekly to be a useful resource, and we welcome your comments and suggestions.

— Session Weekly staff

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On the cover: Margaret Anderson Kelliher is sworn in Jan. 3 as House speaker by Supreme Court Justice Alan Page during the Opening Day of the 85th legislative session.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Turnover

A new biennium, a new party in power and a new agenda

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

It seems that since 1955, party control switches in the House of Representatives about every eight years, on average.

And when the voters speak, a chain reaction of change plays out during the next two years.

It begins with members' offices: the party gaining control moves up a couple of floors in the State Office Building and the other moves down; some staff connected with the losing party is let go and the winning side gets more hires.

And the political process?

Leadership changes, the number of committees and their names change, and a flood gate opens for pent-up bills from the party that had been in the minority.

The 2006 election brought just such a change to the House, where the DFL now holds an 85-49 advantage, after gaining 19 seats.

History shows that when turnover happens, it is not uncommon for people new to the political process to be swept into office. This

election brings 35 new faces to the House: 29 Democrats and six Republicans.

Change happens

Arguably the most significant turnover election in the House history — the 1978 election known as the “Minnesota Massacre” — brought two new members to the House, Rep. Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) and Rep. Dean Johnson (R-Willmar). Both would eventually play key roles in the Legislature.

In the 2006 turnover year, each saw their political futures altered. Sviggum is now in the minority party, and Johnson, who later switched parties and legislative bodies, was not re-elected to the Senate.

Change happens for a variety of reasons.

In 1978, it was the result of voters' displeasure with the DFL's “failure to control rising taxes and to limit state spending,” and a set of political maneuvers used to fill vacancies to make three of Minnesota's top elected officials appointed rather than elected, writes

former Rep. Rod Searle (R-Waseca) in his book “Minnesota Standoff — the Politics of Deadlock.” Searle served the House 1959–80, and was speaker in 1979.

When the dust settled from that election, the DFL had lost the governor and state auditor offices and two U.S. Senate seats. While the Senate did not stand for election in 1978, the House DFL saw its 20-seat majority erased to create a party tie for the first, and only time, in its history.

In 2006, according to Sviggum, national issues hurt his party and played a considerable role in the DFL gaining the House, the secretary of state and state auditor offices. On a federal level, Amy Klobuchar defeated Mark Kennedy to keep the Senate seat that was up for grabs in DFL hands, and Tim Walz beat six-term Republican congressman Gil Gutknecht.

“It was about the war, the Washington scandals and the ethics issues that were raised. People were going to send George W. Bush a message about the war. ... It made it very difficult for anyone with an ‘R’ behind their name,” Sviggum said.

Swept in, swept out

With his party now in the minority, Sviggum, who served as speaker for the past eight years, now finds himself seated on the House floor.

“I guess you could say I am the last one standing from the election of 1978,” Sviggum said.

He sees little to compare that turnover year with this past election other than maybe the surprise of it all. Back then, because Sviggum was a newcomer to politics and running against an incumbent, he was surprised to be elected. This time he was surprised, given the health of the state's economy, the deficit-to-surplus turnaround and the state's low unemployment rate, that the Republicans received such a thumping.

“I knew we were running into a headwind ... I knew it would be difficult,” he said reflecting on the turn of events, but the “tsunami,” as he called it, was a surprise.

Modeling former speakers

Shepherding the House in a turnover year can be a challenge for a speaker.

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Under the supervision of his daughter, Rep. Jim Davnie unloads boxes Jan. 2 after a move to another office. With the change in party control, most DFL members now reside on the fourth and fifth floors of the State Office Building. House Republicans are now on the second and third floors. A list of representatives and their offices is available at www.house.mn/hinfo/leginfo/memroster.pdf.

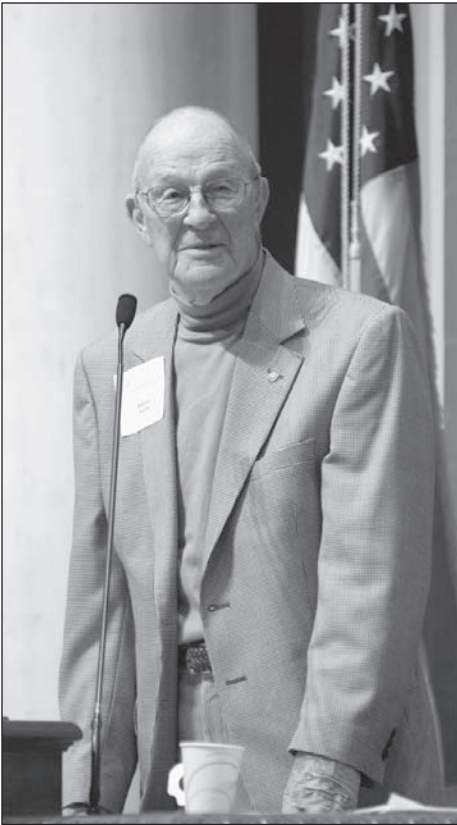


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rod Searle served as House speaker after arguably the most significant turnover election in the House history — the 1978 election known as the “Minnesota Massacre” — when the House was tied for the first and only time in its history. Searle sat in the speaker’s chair during a mock session with ex-legislators Dec. 15.

As speaker, Searle knew that if anything was to get done in 1979, it would take a tremendous amount of finesse on his part, he said in a recent interview. He took his cue from his predecessor Martin Sabo (DFL-Mpls) who held the speaker’s gavel from 1973–78. “Martin was always respectful of the minority, and when I needed something accomplished, he saw to it that it was,” said Searle, who served as assistant minority leader in 1977–78.

Searle said that when he met with Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) he told her, “If you can be as fair as Sabo, you won’t have any problems.”

Pent up ideas

Now that a new party is in control of the House, will much really change?

Bill Salisbury has been covering the Capitol for the St. Paul Pioneer Press since 1975, and

has seen party control in the House shift five times. He said last session’s 68-66 party split in the House led to gridlock, and it would be advantageous for the DFL to show that they can get things done. He expects the most noticeable change will be the substance of the bills that will be introduced and heard in committee.

“There is a lot of pent-up demand to address DFL issues, and there is a sign of relief from some groups like the pro-choice and gay and lesbians who felt threatened by the Republicans,” he said.

New House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) agrees there are a lot of DFL ideas just waiting to be heard, and he is excited about the possibility of a new agenda.

First elected in 2000, Sertich has only known what it is like to be in the minority. “It was frustrating. You don’t have the same voice as when you are in the majority.” But he said the DFL will not be playing “payback.”

“Republicans will have a voice. I trust the public when they sent a DFL-controlled Senate and House and a Republican governor to the Capitol. They expect results. They didn’t elect us to fight with each other.”

New role for the GOP

Salisbury said House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) will play “a watchdog role, to scrutinize the DFL,” he said. “A good minority leader can actually enhance legislation.”

Searle cautions Seifert to be flexible. “I know how tough it is to keep a caucus together, especially after your party’s been defeated. There are so many egos.”

Seifert’s name was placed into nomination for speaker on the first day of session. It was no surprise that with new DFL majority, he was soundly defeated by Kelliher. While he would much rather be sitting in the speaker’s

chair, Seifert is looking forward to his new role in the House. He said that having a Republican governor puts the minority party in a pretty good negotiating position.

“We also understand

that those in the majority campaigned on getting along. Let’s see if they actually can live up to that promise,” he said.

Seifert said he and Kelliher work well together and expects there may be some opportunities for real legislative reform that several members of the House have been bipartisanly working on over the past few years.

Time will tell. 🐶

Turning over control

Looking back to 1955, it appears that a political party loses control of the Minnesota House of Representatives about every eight years. It should be noted that in 1913, Minnesota legislators began to be elected on nonpartisan ballots, but ran and caucused as Liberals or Conservatives. Since 1974, House members have been running with party designation.

| Turnover election year* | Liberals | Conservatives |
|--|-----------|---------------|
| 1954 | | |
| Conservatives lost 20 seats. | 66 | 65 |
| The House held 131 members. | | |
| 1962 | | |
| Liberals lost 19 seats. | 54 | 80 |
| The House added three seats bringing its membership to 135. One new House member did not claim to be part of either caucus. | | |
| 1972 | | |
| Conservatives lost 13 seats. | 77 | 57 |
| The House dropped its membership to the current 134. | | |
| | Democrats | Republicans |
| 1978 | | |
| Democrats lost 32 seats. | 67 | 67 |
| This is the only time in Minnesota history when the House was evenly divided by party. Democrats eventually gained control when a Republican member was unseated by a vote of the House on charges of unfair campaign practices and a Democrat won the special election. | | |
| 1984 | | |
| The Democrats lost 11 seats. | 65 | 69 |
| 1986 | | |
| The Republicans lost 17 seats | 83 | 51 |
| 1998 | | |
| The Democrats lost 7 seats | 63 | 71 |
| 2006 | | |
| Republicans lost 19 seats. | 85 | 49 |

* **Membership numbers are from the first day of the legislative session.**

Statistics from the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library Web site.

Editor's Note: Committee coverage is expected to begin with the Jan. 12 issue of Session Weekly. For updated committee schedules and agendas, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/hinfosched.asp. To receive electronic updates of House schedules and committee information, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/maillist/maillinglist.asp.

BUDGET

Surplus to start session

Although the budget forecast released Nov. 29 by the Department of Finance shows a projected \$2.17 billion surplus for the 2008-09 biennium, it's the February forecast that will be used by legislators to craft final budgets for those years.

The November forecast includes a nearly \$1.04 billion balance projected at the end of the current biennium on June 30, 2007. A surplus of \$1.13 billion is projected for the 2008-09 biennium.

By law, the money available at the end of the current biennium is to be designated as available for a rebate. While not automatic, a proposal for rebating the money must be considered by the 2007 Legislature.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty said he'll offer some kind of plan, and would rather see something more permanent for spending the surplus.

Former Finance Commissioner Peggy

Ingison cautiously added, at the release, that lawmakers must be aware that much of the surplus is one-time money, and that however it is spent should be sustainable into the future.

The forecast does not allow for inflationary increases on spending, which Ingison and State Economist Tom Stinson warned could cost about \$1 billion in 2008-09.

Still, legislative leaders mostly smiled at press conferences later that day.

"For Minnesotans who have had sticker shock when they've seen their property tax statements, help is on the way," said House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls).

Added House Majority Leader Tony Bertich (DFL-Chisholm): "Our top target for tax relief is permanent property tax relief." He said that could be accomplished in a variety of ways, including increased education funding or more in local government aid to eligible cities. Kelliher said tax rebates are unlikely.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) said his caucus, too, wants to focus on tax relief, but the question is how to do it. "We will be looking at taxpayers first and special interests second."

Seifert also said the surplus should mean no new tax increases of any kind for Minnesotans. "The average person out there, unless they are off the deep end of liberalism, understands when you have that type of a surplus you should be able to live within your means."



PHOTO BY TOM OLSCHKEID

Former Finance Commissioner Peggy Ingison answers questions during a Nov. 29 news conference at the release of the November forecast, which shows a projected \$2.17 billion surplus for the 2008-09 biennium.

GOVERNMENT

No committees, floor sessions Jan. 9

No business will be conducted Tuesday, Jan. 9 by the House or Senate because legislators are scheduled to attend an all-day, educational conference — "One Minnesota. Our State. Our Future."

According to conference coordinators, the event is a shared effort between the Legislative Coordinating Commission, House, Senate and the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

Topics to be covered include: Minnesota's place in the global economy; the impact of the state's changing demographics, technology's role in government services; and the changing role of state legislatures.

Legislators will also have an opportunity to visit several technology exhibits and hear presentations from various legislative sub-caucus groups such as Early Childhood and the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance.

For more information, contact coordinators Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover) at (651) 296-5369 or former state senator Sheila Kiscaden at (507) 288-5980.

A sharing of legislative priorities

Legislative leaders have some similar priorities for the 2007 session — but they have different views in how to accomplish them.

Along with Gov. Tim Pawlenty, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls), Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller (DFL-Mpls), House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) and Senate Minority Leader David Senjem (R-Rochester) shared their views at a Dec. 12 Associated Press forum about the 85th session.

(Watch the forum at http://www.senate.mn/media/archive/2006/updatespress/pc_apforum_121206.htm.)

Kelliher said the new House DFL majority has a "Stick to the Basics" agenda that includes education system investments, property tax relief and doing better in health care. "People feel they are one health care crisis away from financial instability," she said.

Balanced permanent property tax relief across the state is a priority for House Democrats, and this could take a number of forms, Kelliher said. "For some, local government aid is an important tool in that; for others, being able to put money into the

Continued on page 18

A new leader for a new majority

Kelliher pledges bipartisanship as she takes over as House speaker

By PATTY OSTBERG

In 1998 when House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) began campaigning for her district seat, she was frequently greeted by her constituents with, “You’re going to have some big shoes to fill.” They were referring to former House Speaker Dee Long (DFL-Mpls), who previously held the spot and was the first female House speaker in state history.

“I’m going to bring my own pair of shoes,” became Kelliher’s response.

From working for former House Speaker Bob Vanasek (DFL-New Prague) to helping override Gov. Jesse Ventura’s veto of a \$3 million allocation for the Guthrie Theater in 2000, Kelliher has walked miles in those shoes.

She began her political marathon in the 1980’s during Minnesota’s farm crisis.

As neighbors were forced off their lands due to falling land prices and rising farm debt, Kelliher remembers sitting across the dinner table looking in shock at her father. “I remember my dad crying,” because of the stress and the threat of losing their 70-head dairy farm, she said.

In response, she and her mother rode a school bus to the State Capitol for a farm rally. Sixteen at the time, she recalled a very cold day with people with their tractors and farm equipment lining the Capitol Mall and steps. The gathering fostered in her a sense of wanting to know who makes the types of decisions that affect people’s livelihoods.

Learning by listening

Eventually, the experience of working on a campaign during college led her to a job opportunity at the House with Vanasek. “There’s nothing like learning by doing,” she said, before adding, with a laugh, “(There are) things I wish I’d paid even more attention to.”

Vanasek felt like he made good hires, and trusted those he did, she said. Before he would ever tell an employee what he thought, he

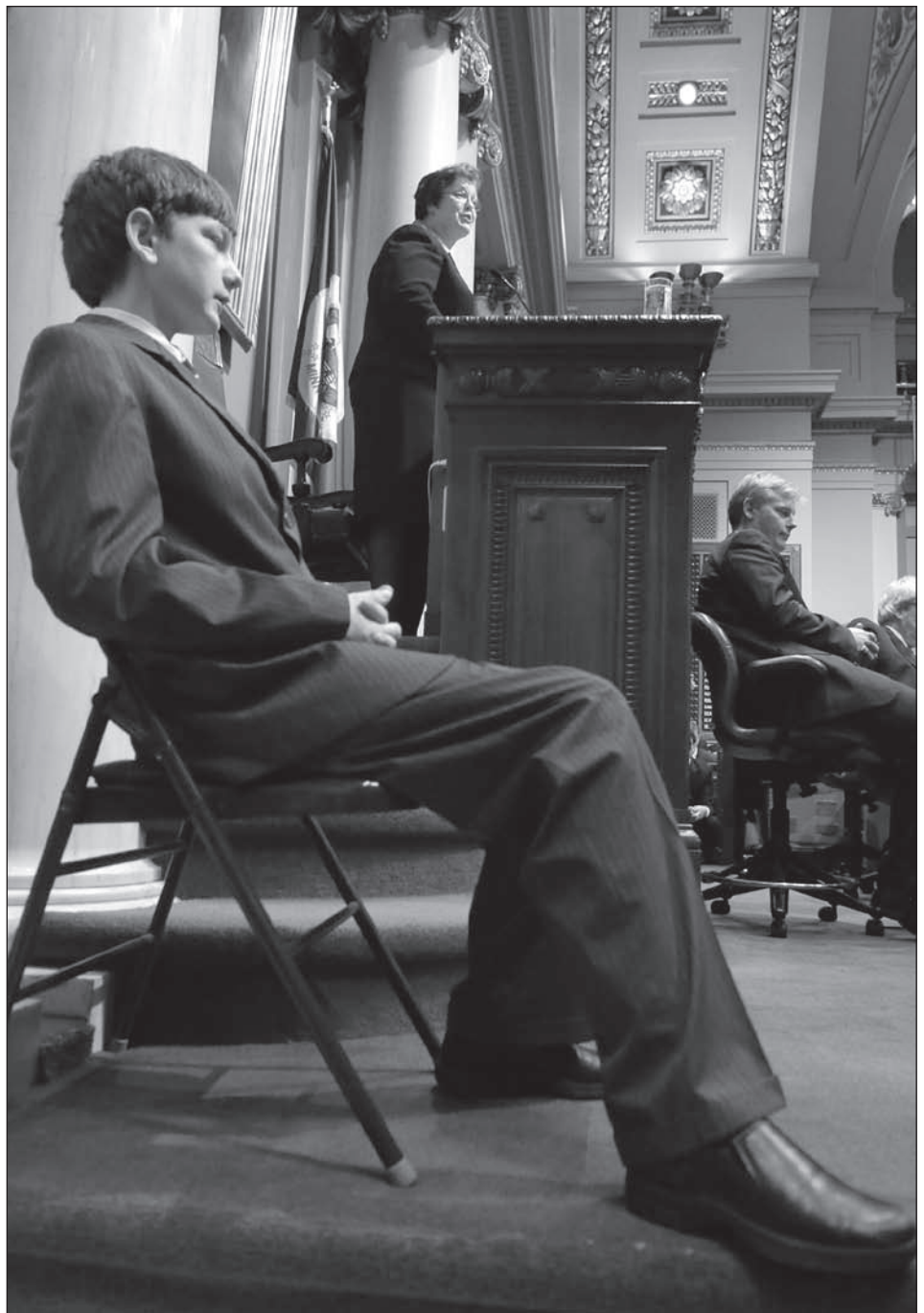


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Seated at the front desk of the House Chamber, Patrick Kelliher listens as his mother, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, addresses the other 133 House members Jan. 3.

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would ask what they thought about an issue. “Sometimes you didn’t really know what to think,” she explained, but he would listen.

Being a good listener is one skill she believes helped in her nomination as speaker. “I may not always agree completely, but I am willing to give people a fair hearing on their point of view or idea,” she said.

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) echoed that during her nomination.

“She leads by listening,” and is not threatened by people who disagree with her. ... “The ability to listen is the mark of a true leader,” he said.

She left the Legislature for neighborhood organizing, but not for long.

As the workload began to wind down, she received a phone call from then-Senate President Allan Spear (DFL-Mpls). An assistant to the president position opened, but she was reluctant to accept the offer with her 8-month-old daughter and 4-year-old son at home. Plus, she was contemplating her own

run for the House. Eventually she gave in and became responsible for bill referrals coming to the president’s office.

In that role, she researched the history of bills, the jurisdictional home they were previously sent to and would assign bills to committees.

Applying her principles

These skills afforded her some know-how in creating the new, larger House committee structure for this session. Bill referral is unique to every leader in terms of where the leader wants things to go, Kelliher said.


The formulation of more committees brings together legislators from areas like education and health and human services to create quality discussion on how to better fund coexisting issues, she said. A thorough discussion engages new legislation to move forward, and “the body can respect the work of the committee a little more,” Kelliher added.

As speaker, Kelliher is determined to work in a bipartisan way, while also addressing the so-called “bread and butter” issues. She said health care access and affordability, property tax relief, and a recommitment to investing in education are highest in priority.

She also intends to meet often with the House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall).

“I think what she is doing is really terrific,” Seifert said. “It’s hard to throw bombs at people when you’re talking to them on a regular basis.”

Constituents will see legislation passed early in the session, and not waiting until March as in previous years. Also gone will be the “cold and rigid partisanship of the past,” she said during opening ceremonies.

Everyone is elected by their constituency around here, sometimes the Democrats come out on top, sometimes the Republicans, Kelliher said. We serve our constituents better when we do the legislating in a way that brings us together, working on their behalf. 

New leadership for the House



Speaker of the House
Margaret Anderson Kelliher
(DFL-Mpls)



Majority Leader
Tony Sertich
(DFL-Chisholm)



Minority Leader
Marty Seifert
(R-Marshall)

Assistant Majority Leader
Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park)

Assistant Majority Leader
Tina Liebling (DFL-Rochester)

Assistant Majority Leader
Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji)

Assistant Majority Leader
Mike Nelson (DFL-Brooklyn Park)

Assistant Majority Leader
Aaron Peterson (DFL-Appleton)

Assistant Majority Leader
Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park)

Deputy Minority Leader
Tom Emmer (R-Delano)

Minority Whip
Denny McNamara (R-Hastings)

Assistant Minority Leader
Laura Brod (R-New Prague)

Assistant Minority Leader
Brad Finstad (R-Comfrey)

Assistant Minority Leader
Dean Simpson (R-Perham)

Assistant Minority Leader
Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove)

Assistant Minority Whip
Mike Beard (R-Shakopee)

Assistant Minority Whip
Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers)

Assistant Minority Whip
Matt Dean (R-Dellwood)

Assistant Minority Whip
Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington)

Assistant Minority Whip
Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder)

Speakers of the Minnesota House of Representatives

2007: Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls)
 1999-2006: Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon)
 1997-1998: Phil Carruthers
 (DFL-Brooklyn Center)
 1993-1996: Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l. Falls)
 1992-1993: Dee Long (DFL-Mpls)
 1987-1991: Robert E. Vanasek
 (DFL-New Prague)
 1987: Fred C. Norton (DFL-St. Paul)
 1985-1986: David M. Jennings (IR-Truman)
 1981-1984: Harry A. Sieben (DFL-Hastings)
 1980: Fred C. Norton (DFL-St. Paul)
 1979: Rodney N. Searle (IR-Waseca)
 Elected as a compromise since the
 House was evenly divided.
 1973-1978: Martin O. Sabo (DFL-Mpls)
 1971-1972: Aubrey W. Dirlam
 (C/R-Redwood Falls)
 1963-1970: Lloyd L. Duxbury (C/R-Caledonia)
 1959-1962: Edward J. Chilgren (L/D-Littlefork)
 1955-1958: Alfred I. Johnson (L/D-Benson)
 1949-1954: John A. Hartle (C/R-Owatonna)
 1939-1948: Lawrence M. Hall (C/R-St. Cloud)
 1937-1938: Harold H. Baker (L/FL-Elbow Lake)
 1935-1936: George W. Johnson (C/R-Duluth)
 1933-1934: Charles Munn (L/FL-Osseo)
 1931-1932: Oscar A. Swenson (C/R-Nicollet)
 1925-1930: John A. Johnson (C/R-Preston)

1919-1924: William I. Nolan (C/R-Mpls)
 1917-1918: Ralph J. Parker (C-Spring Valley)
 1915-1916: H. H. Flowers (C/R-Cleveland)
 1913-1914: Henry Rines (Mora)
 1911-1912: Howard H. Dunn (F-Fairmont)
 1909-1910: Anton J. Rockne (R-Zumbrota)
 1907-1908: Lawrence H. Johnson (R-Mpls)
 1905-1906: Frank Clague (R-Lamberton)
 1903-1904: Leverett W. Babcock (R-Wadena)
 1901-1902: Michael J. Dowling (R-Renville)
 1899-1900: Arthur N. Dare (R-Elk River)
 1897-1898: John D. Jones (R-Long Prairie)
 1895-1896: Samuel R. Van Sant
 (R-Winona County)
 1893-1894: William E. Lee (R-Long Prairie)
 1891: Ezra T. Champlin (A-Garden City)
 1889-1890: Charles H. Graves (R-Duluth)
 1887-1888: William R. Merriam (R-St. Paul)
 1885-1886: John L. Gibbs (R-Geneva)
 1881-1884: Loren Fletcher (R-Mpls)
 1878-1880: Charles A. Gilman (R-St. Cloud)
 1877: John L. Gibbs (R-Geneva)
 1875-1876: William R. Kinyon (R-Owatonna)
 1872-1874: Albert R. Hall (R-Dayton)
 1870-1871: John L. Merriam (R-St. Paul)
 1869: Chester D. Davidson (R-Mpls)
 1867-1868: John Q. Farmer
 (W/R-Spring Valley)

1866: James B. Wakefield (R-Blue Earth City)
 1865: Thomas H. Armstrong (R-High Forest)
 1864: Jared Benson (R-Anoka)
 1863: Charles D. Sherwood (R-Elkhorn)
 1861-1862: Jared Benson (R-Anoka)
 1859-1860: Amos Cogswell (R/D-Aurora)
 1858: George Bradley (R-Belle Plaine)
 1857-1858: John S. Watrous (R)

TERRITORY

1857: Joseph W. Furber (W-Cottage Grove)
 1856: Charles Gardner (Westervelt)
 1855: James S. Norris (D-Cottage Grove)
 1854: Nathan C.D. Taylor (Taylors Falls)
 1853: David Day (Long Prairie)
 1852: John D. Ludden (Marine)
 1851: Michael E. Ames (Stillwater)
 1849: Joseph W. Furber (W-Cottage Grove)

Legend:

**DFL=Democratic-Farmer-Labor; R=Republican;
 IR=Independent-Republican; A=Alliance;
 D=Democrat; C=Conservative; FL=Farmer-
 Labor; L=Liberal; P=Populist; W=Whig**

Source: Legislative Reference Library

Minnesota's Constitutional Officers

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A mostly ceremonial start

Legislative session begins for 134 House members

By SONJA HEGMAN

Opening day of the House session Jan. 3 was a blurred mixture of excitement, thumbs-up signals, waves, and members and children dressed in their Sunday best. Cameras big and small appeared, capturing representatives with their families and each other.

Shouts from the galleries were heard — and at one point, the ringing of a cow bell followed by cheering. The galleries were overflowing with friends and family along with television cameras.

Many representatives greeted each other with smiles and handshakes, some jokingly saying they were surprised the other was back for another term. Rep. Bev Scalze (DFL-Little Canada) commented on her new seating arrangement.

“Looks like I’m going to be in a Larry sandwich this year,” she said, jokingly of her desk placement between Reps. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph) and Larry Haws (DFL-St. Cloud).

As noon approached, it became more and

more difficult to maneuver though the House Chamber.

And then the bell sounded, alerting members that session was about to kick off.

Newly elected Secretary of State Mark Ritchie was introduced and greeted with a standing ovation as he walked to the front of the House Chamber to call the session to order.

After roll call was taken, District Court Judge Ron Abrams, who served in the House from 1989-2006, gave the Oath of Office to the 134 House members.

“Opening Day is the most important day of the year, because family is here,” he said.

With her family and many relatives present, Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) was voted speaker of the house on a party line 84-49 vote. Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) abstained.

“She leads by listening, even when what’s said is not necessarily what she wants to hear,” said Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) during his nomination of Kelliher. “She knows that government is not a game. It’s about doing

the business of the state.”

On the Republican side, Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton) nominated House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) for the top post, saying he is “a scholar of rules and understands due process.”

Shouts resounded as Ritchie hugged Kelliher before she took her place atop the rostrum below a portrait of Abraham Lincoln, one of her heroes. Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page gave Kelliher the Oath of Office.

“It’s with a great deal of humility that I accept this gavel,” Kelliher said. “On a dairy farm growing up, I never would have dreamed of this day.”

In addition to thanking Seifert for being a nominee, Kelliher recognized her predecessor, Rep. Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) for his years as speaker.

The day was not tension-free, however. Some contention arose when House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) introduced the temporary House rules for approval.

Adopted 86-49 with Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) joining DFLers in support.

The rules were almost identical to the last year’s, Sertich said, but more committees were added for this session.

Seifert called the increase in the number of committees by 33 percent “explosive.” Because of this, bills would be “shoveled back and forth” through different committees, making it difficult for residents who want to testify on an issue, he said.

“I don’t see this as exploding,” Sertich said. “I see this as broadening.”

Another concern was term limits in a committee. The language was changed to read, “A member must not serve as the chair of the same standing committee, or a standing committee with substantially the same jurisdiction, during more than the three immediately prior consecutive regular biennial sessions.” In previous years, it read that “during more than three consecutive regular biennial sessions that the member’s caucus is in the majority, even if the sessions are not otherwise consecutive.”

Sertich indicated that, this way, DFL members who chaired a committee when their party last had House control in 1998 could now chair a similar committee. 🏛️



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Rep. Steve Sviggum acknowledges those in the House Chamber after being recognized for his service as House speaker. Sviggum, led the body from 1999-2006.

PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Rep. Rod Hamilton and his son observe the activity on the House floor during the first day of the 2007 session.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Legislators and their guests take pictures and visit in the House Chamber Jan. 3 before the start of the 2007 session.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Ryan Hansen, son of Rep. Rick Hansen, watches friends and family members fill the House Chamber Jan. 3 before the opening of the 85th legislative session.





Welcome to the House

The first day — all about friends, family and goodwill



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Hennepin County District Court Judge Ron Abrams, a former nine-term House member, swears in House members during the first day of the 2007 session.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Holding his 2-year-old son, Braxton, House Minority Leader Marty Seifert congratulates House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, as she is escorted to the rostrum to be sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Alan Page.

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A plant management employee raises the MIA/POW flag over the House Chamber in the north wing of the Capitol early on the opening day of the 2007 session. Capitol flags were flown at half staff to honor former President Ford, who died Dec. 26.

Meet the new class

New House members focus on bipartisanship, moderation

By Nick Busse

When the 35 newly elected House members gathered to learn the nuts and bolts of legislating at a three-day retreat in Chaska in late-November, [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) had much reason to feel out of place.

Tingelstad, who co-coordinated the event, was about to help train a group of legislators who had just wrested control of the House away from her party in a midterm election landslide.

In fact, Republicans had taken such a “thumping” (a term used by President Bush) on Election Day that the Republican

Republicans: moderate politics and devout bipartisanship.

In fact, in terms of politics, she said sometimes she couldn’t tell Democrat from Republican.

“I recall a couple of times during the three-day retreat where I’d be talking to a Democrat member and they’d say something where I’d have to look at their nametag again and say, ‘Now, are you a Democrat? That sounded like something a Republican would say,’” Tingelstad said.

All things considered, a number of different factors make the new freshman class of House members unique — its unusual size, its

Everything in moderation

According to [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), who worked with Tingelstad on freshman orientation, the freshman class of 2007 has a “get things done” attitude that he thinks grew, at least in part, out of disgust over the 2005 budget impasse that ended with a partial state government shutdown.

“These are people, remember, who were looking in from the outside at the state government shutdown a few years ago — and regardless of party, seem to have resolved not to repeat that mistake ever again,” Simon said.

Of course, with an 85-49 DFL majority, one might argue that bipartisanship is irrelevant; Democrats can just do what they want anyway.

Two factors mitigate that notion: the first is Minnesota’s Republican governor, Tim Pawlenty; the second is the overall moderate political bent of the new House members, many of whom won their elections by narrow margins and/or in suburban districts that traditionally vote Republican.

[Rep. Kate Knuth](#) (DFL-New Brighton), whose district was represented by a Republican last year, acknowledged that the new DFL members aren’t likely to interpret the election results as a license to pursue a liberal agenda.

“I think you’ve got Democrats elected in traditionally more conservative places. It’s going to diversify the [House DFL] caucus, I’m sure,” Knuth said, adding, “I think the caucus leadership is speaking fairly moderately in general, and I think the voters expect that of us.”

That’s good news for [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata), one of just a handful of new Republicans.

“You look for a silver lining,” Berns said of the election results. “As a Republican, I would like my party to be in the majority at the House. We’re not. But I have more opportunity, then, to connect to people across the aisle. We have so much in common, both as people and as public servants wanting to get things done. And that makes me really feel good about the upcoming session.”

Last fall, Berns was more than a little surprised to learn that he was campaigning on the same issues as many Democrats



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Freshman and veteran members are sworn in by District Court Judge Ron Abrams during Opening Day ceremonies of the 85th Legislature, Jan. 3. Among the 134 members taking the oath are, first row, Rep. David Bly and Rep. Rick Hansen; second row, Rep. Lyle Koenen and Rep. Sandra Masin; third row, Rep. Shelley Madore and Rep. Maria Ruud; fourth row, Rep. Thomas Huntley and Rep. Tim Mahoney.

representative who was supposed to be doing Tingelstad’s job couldn’t because he lost his re-election in what was once considered a safe Republican district.

Tingelstad, however, found reason to take heart. She discovered two common themes among the 29 new Democrats and six new

overwhelming DFL majority, its large number of women, its preponderance of educators and people with experience in local government.

The uniqueness of its politics, however, might be the greatest factor in how the new legislative session plays out.

Continued on page 18

2007 House Profile

Membership

| | 2007 | 2005 | 2003 | 2001 | 1999 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| DFL | 85 | 66 | 53 | 65 | 63 |
| R | 49 | 68 | 81 | 69 | 71 |
| Men | 91 | 97 | 102 | 99 | 99 |
| Women | 43 | 37 | 32 | 35 | 35 |

Age

| Age range | 2007* | 2005** | 2003** | 2001*** | 1999 |
|-------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|------|
| 21-30 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| 31-40 | 25 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 23 |
| 41-50 | 33 | 40 | 35 | 42 | 51 |
| 51-60 | 38 | 38 | 43 | 41 | 38 |
| 61-70 | 29 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 13 |
| over 71 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Average age | 50.2 | 48.6 | 47.4 | 48.4 | 48.7 |

* Age not available for 1 member

**Ages not available for 2 members

*** Ages not available for 4 members

Education

| Education level | 2007 | 2005 | 2003 | 2001 | 1999 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| High School | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Technical College | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Some College | 9 | 13 | 14 | 19 | 23 |
| 4-yr. Undergraduate Degree | 34 | 40 | 47 | 44 | 39 |
| Some Graduate Work | 21 | 20 | 15 | 13 | 13 |
| Graduate Degree | 60 | 51 | 48 | 50 | 49 |

Current Term

| Term | 2007 | 2005 | 2003 | 2001 | 1999 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 | 35 | 25 | 46 | 18 | 20 |
| 2 | 23 | 38 | 17 | 20 | 24 |
| 3 | 27 | 14 | 15 | 22 | 25 |
| 4 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 22 | 20 |
| 5 | 8 | 12 | 11 | 17 | 10 |
| 6 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 5 |
| 7 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 10 |
| 8 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| 9 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 13 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 14 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 15 or more | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 |

Occupation

| Occupation | 2007 | 2005 | 2003 | 2001 | 1999 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Educator | 28 | 21 | 22 | 20 | 19 |
| Attorney | 16 | 19 | 16 | 15 | 17 |
| Business | 13 | 18 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| Legislator | 12 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 14 |
| Retired | 10 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Consultant | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Government | 4 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| Real Estate | 2 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| Communications | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Trades | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Farming | 3 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| Homemaker | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Health Care | 2 | — | — | — | — |
| Social Services | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Law Enforcement | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Other | 26 | 26 | 21 | 28 | 24 |

New members



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Occupation: Advanced placement English teacher. **Education:** B.A., English, Graceland University; M.F.A., writing, Hamline University. **Elected:** 2006. **Term:** 1st. **Committees:** E-12 Education; Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division; K-12 Education Finance Division; Labor and Consumer Protection Division; Ways and Means, vice chair.



Winkler, Ryan (DFL) **44B**
525 State Office Building..... (651) 296-7026
E-mail: rep.ryan.winkler@house.mn
Home: Golden Valley
 *505 Ardmore Drive 55422..... (763) 377-9354
Occupation: Attorney/Lawyer. **Education:** B.A., history, Harvard College; J.D., law, University of Minnesota. **Elected:** 2006. **Term:** 1st. **Committees:** Biosciences and Emerging Technologies; Early Childhood Learning Finance Division; Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections; Rules and Legislative Administration; State Government Finance Division.



Tillberry, Tom (DFL) **51B**
501 State Office Building..... (651) 296-5510
E-mail: rep.tom.tillberry@house.mn
Home: Fridley
 *700 Mississippi St. N.E. 55432 (763) 571-7969
Occupation: Educator/Teacher. **Education:** B.A., political science, Winona State University; M.A., counseling, Winona State University. **Elected:** 2006. **Term:** 1st. **Committees:** Commerce and Labor; E-12 Education; Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division; Taxes.



Wollschlager, Sandy (DFL) **28A**
335 State Office Building..... (651) 296-8635
E-mail: rep.sandy.wollschlager@house.mn
Home: Cannon Falls
 *30065 - 82 Ave. Way 55009..... (507) 263-0786
Business: St. Paul
 3M Center 55144..... (651) 575-1671
Occupation: Chemist. **Education:** B.S., chemistry, Augsburg College; M.P.A., public administration, Harvard University. **Elected:** 2006. **Term:** 1st. **Committees:** Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections; Taxes, vice chair; Veterans Affairs Division.



Tschumper, Ken (DFL) **31B**
431 State Office Building..... (651) 296-9278
E-mail: rep.ken.tschumper@house.mn
Home: La Crescent
 *1640 Tschumper Road 55947 (507) 894-4248
Occupation: Dairy farmer. **Education:** B.A., biology, Winona State University. **Elected:** 2006. **Term:** 1st. **Committees:** Health and Human Services; Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division; Local Government and Metro Affairs, vice chair; Ways and Means.

**To find out who represents
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 Call House Public Information
 Services at (651) 296-2146
 or (800) 657-3550**

Sign of the 'Times'

Calling the state's new DFL majority a "case study for political shake-up," the New York Times has turned its eye on Minnesota in what will become a series of articles examining the state's government in the wake of the midterm elections.

"Minnesota's capital is in many ways the perfect petri dish for testing what the nation's new political landscape may produce," writes Times correspondent Kirk Johnson in a Dec. 29, 2006, article (the series' first).

The article, which includes quotes from [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls), [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) and Gov. Tim Pawlenty, among others, argues that the DFL's victory in November owes much to "newly elected moderates from the suburbs who are unlikely to embrace a pure liberal agenda."

Calling the series "occasional," the Times did not state when the next article would be published.

Continued from page 5

circuit breaker that gives some permanent property tax relief will be important.”

Pogemiller said the Senate DFL agrees with the House DFL’s top three priorities, but would also like to look at energy independence, including renewables; a transportation package; and a legacy proposal for things like the arts, clean water, and hunting and fishing.

Seifert said House Republicans agree with the top three priorities, but differ on the aspects of each. For example, Republicans

would like to see a focus on health care reform, and investments in education should come with accountability measures, instead of just a cash infusion. “We want to fund schools, but we want to get our money’s worth,” he said.

Pawlenty is focused on five issues: maintaining fiscal discipline, energy, transportation, and funding and reform for education and health care. “We’re in the process of putting together our budget proposal,” he said, adding that his administration wants to put money in areas where the outcome means better results.

Because this year’s legislative focus is on

setting a budget for the 2008-09 biennium, Pogemiller said the Senate will push for an earlier budget bill deadline, and that policy issues can wait. “Citizens want action on meat and potatoes, bread and butter issues,” he said.

Seifert said tax increases are off the table to pay for any proposals. Kelliher said her caucus would not look to tax increases first, but may look at tax compliance issues and foreign operating corporation tax loopholes.

Continued from page 12

— education, health care, property tax reform and transportation.

“I was joking around — I forget who I told this to, but I said, ‘You know, I’m running on [House Speaker] Margaret Anderson Kelliher’s same platform,’” Berns said.

The devil’s in the details

Unfortunately, a consensus on issues does not guarantee a consensus on legislation. With both parties pledging to cooperate with each other and focus on the same key issues, the big question appears to be whether they can agree on how to achieve their stated goals.

For his part, Berns acknowledges that difficulties are still likely to arise.

“The fact that I have the same issues as folks on the other side of the aisle, of course, doesn’t mean we always agree on how to go about accomplishing those,” he said.

Knuth agrees, but said she remains optimistic about the level of consensus among new members on what issues need to be addressed.

“There’s definitely going to be dialogue and butting of heads about a lot of the details, but I think there’s a significant consensus on what we’re trying to do,” she said.

The freshman class, at a glance

Total new members: 35
Percent of total House: 26.1 percent
DFL: 29
Republican: 6
Male: 20
Female: 15
Advanced degrees: 19
Educators: 12
Farmers: 1
Attorneys: 3
12 Republican incumbents lost
No DFL incumbents lost
Seats open at time of election: 23
Uncontested races: 4
Number of recounts: 3

Welcome to the Minnesota House of Representatives

If you need general information about the House, educational publications about the legislative process or member contact information, stop by House Public Information Services in 175 State Office Building, or call (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550 toll free (voice); or the Minnesota Relay service at 711 or (800) 627-3529 (TTY)

If you want to visit your representative, just stop by his or her office. The offices of all House members are located in the State Office Building. To find the location of your representative’s office, visit House Public Information Services in 175 State Office Building.

If you want to attend a committee hearing in the State Office Building or a floor session in the House chamber in the State Capitol, they are open to the public. Everyone is welcome.

If you want to testify at a committee hearing, contact the committee’s administrator or legislative assistant a day or two before the hearing. It is usually permitted, however, to sign up to testify on the day of the hearing.

If you want a schedule of upcoming meetings, stop by House Public Information Services in 175 State Office Building. Committee and floor session schedules are published daily throughout session. Electronically updated, the schedule can be viewed on a video screen on the first floor of the State Office Building near the elevator. You can call (651) 296-9283 to hear a recorded message of meeting times and agendas.

If you want a copy of a bill, stop by the Chief Clerk’s Office in 211 State Capitol, or call (651) 296-2314.

If you want to determine the status of a particular bill, stop by House Index in 211 State Capitol, or call (651) 296-6646.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, assistive listening devices are available. For House floor sessions, visit the Chief Clerk’s Office in 211 State Capitol. For House committee hearings, the devices are available through the House Sergeant-at-Arms office in 190 State Office Building, or call (651) 296-4860.

If you want to do research on a legislative topic or need wireless Internet access, visit the Legislative Reference Library in 645 State Office Building.

2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives

| District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- | District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 48B | Abeler, Jim (R) | 203 | 1729 | 40B | Lenczewski, Ann (DFL) | 509 | 4218 |
| 19A | Anderson, Bruce (R) | 201 | 5063 | 66A | Lesch, John (DFL) | 537 | 4224 |
| 43A | Anderson, Sarah (R) | 229 | 5511 | 30A | Liebling, Tina (DFL) | 393 | 0573 |
| 3A | Anzelc, Tom (DFL) | 417 | 4936 | 1B | Lieder, Bernard (DFL) | 423 | 5091 |
| 39B | Atkins, Joe (DFL) | 503 | 4192 | 55A | Lillie, Leon (DFL) | 353 | 1188 |
| 35A | Beard, Michael (R) | 207 | 8872 | 59A | Loeffler, Diane (DFL) | 349 | 4219 |
| 43B | Benson, John (DFL) | 517 | 9934 | 37A | Madore, Shelley (DFL) | 507 | 5506 |
| 33B | Berns, John (R) | 311 | 4315 | 22A | Magnus, Doug (R) | 217 | 5505 |
| 57A | Bigham, Karla (DFL) | 529 | 4342 | 67A | Mahoney, Tim (DFL) | 591 | 4277 |
| 25B | Bly, David (DFL) | 557 | 7065 | 65B | Mariani, Carlos (DFL) | 563 | 9714 |
| 25A | Brod, Laura (R) | 321 | 4229 | 9B | Marquart, Paul (DFL) | 597 | 6829 |
| 27A | Brown, Robin (DFL) | 337 | 8216 | 38A | Masin, Sandra (DFL) | 527 | 3533 |
| 23B | Brynaert, Kathy (DFL) | 421 | 3248 | 53B | McFarlane, Carol (R) | 223 | 5363 |
| 35B | Buesgens, Mark (R) | 307 | 5185 | 57B | McNamara, Denny (R) | 271 | 3135 |
| 56A | Bunn, Julie (DFL) | 521 | 4244 | 4A | Moe, Frank (DFL) | 369 | 5516 |
| 45B | Carlson, Lyndon (DFL) | 479 | 4255 | 40A | Morgan, Will (DFL) | 531 | 4212 |
| 61A | Clark, Karen (DFL) | 471 | 0294 | 23A | Morrow, Terry (DFL) | 415 | 8634 |
| 24B | Cornish, Tony (R) | 281 | 4240 | 58A | Mullery, Joe (DFL) | 367 | 4262 |
| 62A | Davnie, Jim (DFL) | 545 | 0173 | 64A | Murphy, Erin (DFL) | 413 | 8799 |
| 52B | Dean, Matt (R) | 327 | 3018 | 6B | Murphy, Mary (DFL) | 343 | 2676 |
| 49A | DeLaForest, Chris (R) | 323 | 4231 | 46A | Nelson, Michael (DFL) | 569 | 3751 |
| 29A | Demmer, Randy (R) | 225 | 9236 | 10A | Nornes, Bud (R) | 277 | 4946 |
| 52A | Dettmer, Bob (R) | 329 | 4124 | 29B | Norton, Kim (DFL) | 387 | 9249 |
| 6A | Dill, David (DFL) | 571 | 2190 | 1A | Olin, Dave (DFL) | 593 | 9635 |
| 47A | Dittrich, Denise (DFL) | 371 | 5513 | 16B | Olson, Mark (R) | 301 | 4237 |
| 58B | Dominguez, Augustine "Willie" (DFL) | 539 | 8659 | 11B | Otremba, Mary Ellen (DFL) | 445 | 3201 |
| 12B | Doty, Al (DFL) | 433 | 4247 | 37B | Ozment, Dennis (R) | 283 | 4306 |
| 17A | Eastlund, Rob (R) | 243 | 5364 | 42B | Paulsen, Erik (R) | 309 | 7449 |
| 2A | Eken, Kent (DFL) | 575 | 9918 | 64B | Paymar, Michael (DFL) | 543 | 4199 |
| 19B | Emmer, Tom (R) | 261 | 4336 | 31A | Pelowski Jr., Gene (DFL) | 491 | 8637 |
| 41A | Erhardt, Ron (R) | 245 | 4363 | 32A | Peppin, Joyce (R) | 331 | 7806 |
| 16A | Erickson, Sondra (R) | 279 | 6746 | 20A | Peterson, Aaron (DFL) | 451 | 4228 |
| 8B | Faust, Tim (DFL) | 567 | 0518 | 41B | Peterson, Neil W. (R) | 213 | 7803 |
| 21B | Finstad, Brad (R) | 251 | 9303 | 45A | Peterson, Sandra (DFL) | 345 | 4176 |
| 26B | Fritz, Patti (DFL) | 551 | 8237 | 27B | Poppe, Jeanne (DFL) | 487 | 4193 |
| 53A | Gardner, Paul (DFL) | 581 | 2907 | 5A | Rukavina, Tom (DFL) | 477 | 0170 |
| 36B | Garofalo, Pat (R) | 221 | 1069 | 26A | Ruth, Connie (R) | 291 | 5368 |
| 15A | Gottwalt, Steve (R) | 231 | 6316 | 42A | Ruud, Maria (DFL) | 515 | 3964 |
| 54A | Greiling, Mindy (DFL) | 381 | 5387 | 2B | Sailer, Brita (DFL) | 577 | 4265 |
| 24A | Gunther, Bob (R) | 289 | 3240 | 54B | Scalze, Bev (DFL) | 357 | 7153 |
| 48A | Hackbarth, Tom (R) | 209 | 2439 | 21A | Seifert, Marty (R) | 267 | 5374 |
| 22B | Hamilton, Rod (R) | 215 | 5373 | 5B | Sertich, Anthony "Tony" (DFL) | 459 | 0172 |
| 39A | Hansen, Rick (DFL) | 401 | 6828 | 14A | Severson, Dan (R) | 233 | 7808 |
| 66B | Hausman, Alice (DFL) | 453 | 3824 | 18A | Shimanski, Ron (R) | 227 | 1534 |
| 15B | Haws, Larry (DFL) | 473 | 6612 | 44A | Simon, Steve (DFL) | 375 | 9889 |
| 13A | Heidgerken, Bud (R) | 237 | 4317 | 10B | Simpson, Dean (R) | 295 | 4293 |
| 46B | Hilstrom, Debra (DFL) | 379 | 3709 | 55B | Slawik, Nora (DFL) | 403 | 7807 |
| 8A | Hilty, Bill (DFL) | 559 | 4308 | 63B | Slocum, Linda (DFL) | 523 | 7158 |
| 36A | Holberg, Mary Liz (R) | 303 | 6926 | 33A | Smith, Steve (R) | 253 | 9188 |
| 34B | Hoppe, Joe (R) | 317 | 5066 | 3B | Solberg, Loren (DFL) | 443 | 2365 |
| 60B | Hornstein, Frank (DFL) | 437 | 9281 | 28B | Sviggum, Steve (R) | 247 | 2273 |
| 47B | Hortman, Melissa (DFL) | 377 | 4280 | 56B | Swails, Marsha (DFL) | 409 | 1147 |
| 14B | Hosch, Larry (DFL) | 565 | 4373 | 65A | Thao, Cy (DFL) | 359 | 5158 |
| 4B | Howes, Larry (R) | 287 | 2451 | 63A | Thissen, Paul (DFL) | 351 | 5375 |
| 7A | Huntley, Thomas (DFL) | 585 | 2228 | 51B | Tillberry, Tom (DFL) | 501 | 5510 |
| 7B | Jaros, Mike (DFL) | 583 | 4246 | 49B | Tingelstad, Kathy (R) | 255 | 5369 |
| 67B | Johnson, Sheldon (DFL) | 549 | 4201 | 31B | Tschumper, Ken (DFL) | 431 | 9278 |
| 13B | Juhnke, Al (DFL) | 485 | 6206 | 18B | Urdahl, Dean (R) | 239 | 4344 |
| 59B | Kahn, Phyllis (DFL) | 365 | 4257 | 62B | Wagenius, Jean (DFL) | 449 | 4200 |
| 17B | Kalin, Jeremy (DFL) | 579 | 5377 | 61B | Walker, Neva (DFL) | 553 | 7152 |
| 60A | Kelliher, Margaret Anderson (DFL) | 463 | 0171 | 12A | Ward, John (DFL) | 533 | 4333 |
| 50B | Knuth, Kate (DFL) | 429 | 0141 | 38B | Wardlow, Lynn (R) | 241 | 4128 |
| 20B | Koenen, Lyle (DFL) | 439 | 4346 | 30B | Walti, Andy (DFL) | 389 | 4378 |
| 34A | Kohls, Paul (R) | 313 | 4282 | 11A | Westrom, Torrey (R) | 273 | 4929 |
| 51A | Kranz, Scott (DFL) | 411 | 4226 | 44B | Winkler, Ryan (DFL) | 525 | 7026 |
| 50A | Laine, Carolyn (DFL) | 407 | 4331 | 28A | Wollschlager, Sandy (DFL) | 335 | 8635 |
| 9A | Lanning, Morrie (R) | 259 | 5515 | 32B | Zellers, Kurt (R) | 315 | 5502 |

*All rooms are in the State Office Building unless otherwise noted, St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

2007-08 Minnesota Senate

| District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- | District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- |
|----------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 66 | Anderson, Ellen (DFL) | 120 Cap. | 5537 | 39 | Metzen, James (DFL) | 322 Cap. | 4370 |
| 6 | Bakk, Thomas (DFL) | 226 Cap. | 8881 | 41 | Michel, Geoff (R) | 133 SOB | 6238 |
| 61 | Berglin, Linda (DFL) | 309 Cap. | 4261 | 67 | Moua, Mee (DFL) | 120 Cap. | 5285 |
| 51 | Betzold, Don (DFL) | 111 Cap. | 2556 | 28 | Murphy, Steve (DFL) | 325 Cap. | 4264 |
| 43 | Bonoff, Terri (DFL) | 325 Cap. | 4314 | 25 | Neuville, Thomas (R) | 123 SOB | 1279 |
| 38 | Carlson, Jim (DFL) | G-9 Cap. | 7-8073 | 17 | Olseen, Rick (DFL) | G-24 Cap. | 5419 |
| 50 | Chaudhary, Satveer (DFL) | 205 Cap. | 4334 | 33 | Olson, Gen (R) | 119 SOB | 1282 |
| 15 | Clark, Tarryl (DFL) | 208 Cap. | 6455 | 4 | Olson, Mary (DFL) | 124 Cap. | 4913 |
| 64 | Cohen, Richard (DFL) | 121 Cap. | 5931 | 34 | Ortman, Julianne (R) | 125 SOB | 4837 |
| 26 | Day, Dick (R) | 113 SOB | 9457 | 65 | Pappas, Sandra (DFL) | 120 Cap. | 1802 |
| 60 | Dibble, D. Scott (DFL) | 111 Cap. | 4191 | 36 | Pariseau, Pat (R) | 117 SOB | 5252 |
| 18 | Dille, Steve (R) | 103 SOB | 4131 | 59 | Pogemiller, Lawrence (DFL) | 235 Cap. | 7809 |
| 40 | Doll, John (DFL) | G-9 Cap. | 5975 | 45 | Rest, Ann (DFL) | 205 Cap. | 2889 |
| 31 | Erickson Ropes, Sharon (DFL) | G-24 Cap. | 5649 | 35 | Robling, Claire (R) | 143 SOB | 4123 |
| 14 | Fischbach, Michelle (R) | 153 SOB | 2084 | 24 | Rosen, Julie (R) | 109 SOB | 5713 |
| 47 | Foley, Leo (DFL) | G-24 Cap. | 4154 | 53 | Rummel, Sandy (DFL) | 323 Cap. | 1253 |
| 21 | Frederickson, Dennis (R) | 139 SOB | 8138 | 56 | Saltzman, Kathy (DFL) | 306 Cap. | 4166 |
| 37 | Gerlach, Chris (R) | 129 SOB | 4120 | 3 | Saxhaug, Tom (DFL) | 124 Cap. | 4136 |
| 13 | Gimse, Joe (R) | 105 SOB | 3826 | 46 | Scheid, Linda (DFL) | G-9 Cap. | 8869 |
| 42 | Hann, David (R) | 127 SOB | 1749 | 29 | Senjem, David (R) | 147 SOB | 3903 |
| 58 | Higgins, Linda (DFL) | 328 Cap. | 9246 | 23 | Sheran, Kathy (DFL) | G-24 Cap. | 6153 |
| 11 | Ingebrigtsen, Bill (R) | 132D SOB | 8063 | 57 | Sieben, Katie (DFL) | 321 Cap. | 8060 |
| 49 | Johnson, Debbie (R) | 135 SOB | 3219 | 2 | Skoe, Rod (DFL) | 303 Cap. | 4196 |
| 48 | Jungbauer, Michael (R) | 121 SOB | 3733 | 10 | Skogen, Dan (DFL) | 303 Cap. | 5655 |
| 19 | Koch, Amy (R) | 115 SOB | 5981 | 7 | Solon, Yvonne Prettner (DFL) | 303 Cap. | 4188 |
| 12 | Koering, Paul (R) | 131 SOB | 4875 | 27 | Sparks, Dan (DFL) | 317 Cap. | 9248 |
| 20 | Kubly, Gary (DFL) | 301 Cap. | 5094 | 1 | Stumpf, LeRoy (DFL) | 208 Cap. | 8660 |
| 9 | Langseth, Keith (DFL) | 122 Cap. | 3205 | 5 | Tomassoni, David (DFL) | 317 Cap. | 8017 |
| 63 | Larson, Dan (DFL) | 303 Cap. | 8061 | 62 | Torres Ray, Patricia (DFL) | 124 Cap. | 4274 |
| 44 | Latz, Ron (DFL) | 306 Cap. | 8065 | 52 | Vandeveer, Ray (R) | 107 SOB | 4351 |
| 32 | Limmer, Warren (R) | 141 SOB | 2159 | 22 | Vickerman, Jim (DFL) | 226 Cap. | 5650 |
| 8 | Lourey, Tony (DFL) | 205 Cap. | 0293 | 16 | Wergin, Betsy (R) | 145 SOB | 8075 |
| 30 | Lynch, Ann (DFL) | G-24 Cap. | 4848 | 55 | Wiger, Charles (DFL) | 323 Cap. | 6820 |
| 54 | Marty, John (DFL) | 328 Cap. | 5645 | | | | |

*Capitol or State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

Minnesota House and Senate

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|-----------|--|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 1 | A Rep. Dave Olin-(DFL) B Rep. Bernie Lieder-(DFL) Sen. LeRoy Stumpf-(DFL) | 15 | A Rep. Steve Gottwalt-(R) B Rep. Larry Haws-(DFL) Sen. Tarryl Clark-(DFL) | 29 | A Rep. Randy Demmer-(R) B Rep. Kim Norton-(DFL) Sen. David Senjem-(R) | 43 | A Rep. Sarah Anderson-(R) B Rep. John Benson-(DFL) Sen. Terri Bonoff-(DFL) | 57 | A Rep. Karla Bigham -(DFL) B Rep. Denny McNamara-(R) Sen. Katie Sieben-(DFL) |
| 2 | A Rep. Kent Eken-(DFL) B Rep. Brita Sailer-(DFL) Sen. Rod Skoe-(DFL) | 16 | A Rep. Sondra Erickson-(R) B Rep. Mark Olson-(R) Sen. Betsy Wergin-(R) | 30 | A Rep. Tina Liebling-(DFL) B Rep. Andy Welti-(DFL) Sen. Ann Lynch-(DFL) | 44 | A Rep. Steve Simon-(DFL) B Rep. Ryan Winkler-(DFL) Sen. Ron Latz-(DFL) | 58 | A Rep. Joe Mullery-(DFL) B Rep. Augustine Willie Dominguez-(DFL) Sen. Linda Higgins-(DFL) |
| 3 | A Rep. Tom Anzelc-(DFL) B Rep. Loren A. Solberg-(DFL) Sen. Tom Saxhaug-(DFL) | 17 | A Rep. Rob Eastlund-(R) B Rep. Jeremy Kalin-(DFL) Sen. Rick Olseen-(DFL) | 31 | A Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.-(DFL) B Rep. Ken Tschumper-(DFL) Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes-(DFL) | 45 | A Rep. Sandra Peterson-(DFL) B Rep. Lyndon Carlson-(DFL) Sen. Ann Rest-(DFL) | 59 | A Rep. Diane Loeffler-(DFL) B Rep. Phyllis Kahn-(DFL) Sen. Lawrence Pogemiller-(DFL) |
| 4 | A Rep. Frank Moe-(DFL) B Rep. Larry Howes-(R) Sen. Mary Olson-(DFL) | 18 | A Rep. Ron Shimanski-(R) B Rep. Dean Urdahl-(R) Sen. Steve Dille-(R) | 32 | A Rep. Joyce Peppin-(R) B Rep. Kurt Zellers-(R) Sen. Warren Limmer-(R) | 46 | A Rep. Michael Nelson-(DFL) B Rep. Debra Hilstrom-(DFL) Sen. Linda Scheid-(DFL) | 60 | A Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher-(DFL) B Rep. Frank Hornstein-(DFL) Sen. D. Scott Dibble-(DFL) |
| 5 | A Rep. Tom Rukavina-(DFL) B Rep. Anthony "Tony" Sertich-(DFL) Sen. David Tomassoni-(DFL) | 19 | A Rep. Bruce Anderson-(R) B Rep. Tom Emmer-(R) Sen. Amy Koch-(R) | 33 | A Rep. Steve Smith-(R) B Rep. John Berns-(R) Sen. Gen Olson-(R) | 47 | A Rep. Denise Dittrich-(DFL) B Rep. Melissa Hortman-(DFL) Sen. Leo Foley-(DFL) | 61 | A Rep. Karen Clark-(DFL) B Rep. Neva Walker-(DFL) Sen. Linda Berglin-(DFL) |
| 6 | A Rep. David Dill-(DFL) B Rep. Mary Murphy-(DFL) Sen. Thomas Bakk-(DFL) | 20 | A Rep. Aaron Peterson-(DFL) B Rep. Lyle Koenen-(DFL) Sen. Gary Kubly-(DFL) | 34 | A Rep. Paul Kohls-(R) B Rep. Joe Hoppe-(R) Sen. Julianne Ortman-(R) | 48 | A Rep. Tom Hackbarth-(R) B Rep. Jim Abeler-(R) Sen. Michael Jungbauer-(R) | 62 | A Rep. Jim Davnie-(DFL) B Rep. Jean Wagenius-(DFL) Sen. Patricia Torres Ray-(DFL) |
| 7 | A Rep. Thomas Huntley-(DFL) B Rep. Mike Jaros-(DFL) Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon-(DFL) | 21 | A Rep. Marty Seifert-(R) B Rep. Brad Finstad-(R) Sen. Dennis Frederickson-(R) | 35 | A Rep. Michael Beard-(R) B Rep. Mark Buessgens-(R) Sen. Claire Robling-(R) | 49 | A Rep. Chris DeLaForest-(R) B Rep. Kathy Tingelstad-(R) Sen. Debbie Johnson-(R) | 63 | A Rep. Paul Thissen-(DFL) B Rep. Linda Sloucum-(DFL) Sen. Dan Larson-(DFL) |
| 8 | A Rep. Bill Hilty-(DFL) B Rep. Tim Faust-(DFL) Sen. Tony Lourey-(DFL) | 22 | A Rep. Doug Magnus-(R) B Rep. Rod Hamilton-(R) Sen. Jim Vickerman-(DFL) | 36 | A Rep. Mary Liz Holberg-(R) B Rep. Pat Garofalo-(R) Sen. Pat Pariseau-(R) | 50 | A Rep. Carolyn Laine-(DFL) B Rep. Kate Knuth-(DFL) Sen. Satveer Chaudhary-(DFL) | 64 | A Rep. Erin Murphy-(DFL) B Rep. Michael Paymar-(DFL) Sen. Richard Cohen-(DFL) |
| 9 | A Rep. Morrie Lanning-(R) B Rep. Paul Marquart-(DFL) Sen. Keith Langseth-(DFL) | 23 | A Rep. Terry Morrow-(DFL) B Rep. Kathy Brynaert-(DFL) Sen. Kathy Sheran-(DFL) | 37 | A Rep. Shelley Madore-(DFL) B Rep. Dennis Ozmert-(R) Sen. Chris Gerlach-(R) | 51 | A Rep. Scott Kranz-(DFL) B Rep. Tom Tillberry-(DFL) Sen. Don Betzold-(DFL) | 65 | A Rep. Cy Thao-(DFL) B Rep. Carlos Mariani-(DFL) Sen. Sandra Pappas-(DFL) |
| 10 | A Rep. Bud Nornes-(R) B Rep. Dean Simpson-(R) Sen. Dan Skogen-(DFL) | 24 | A Rep. Bob Gunther-(R) B Rep. Tony Cornish-(R) Sen. Julie Rosen-(R) | 38 | A Rep. Sandra Masin-(DFL) B Rep. Lynn Wardlow-(R) Sen. Jim Carlson-(DFL) | 52 | A Rep. Bob Dettmer-(R) B Rep. Matt Dean-(R) Sen. Ray Vandeveer-(R) | 66 | A Rep. John Lesch-(DFL) B Rep. Alice Hausman-(DFL) Sen. Ellen Anderson-(DFL) |
| 11 | A Rep. Torrey Westrom-(R) B Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba-(DFL) Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen-(R) | 25 | A Rep. Laura Brod-(R) B Rep. David Bly-(DFL) Sen. Thomas Neuville-(R) | 39 | A Rep. Rick Hansen-(DFL) B Rep. Joseph Atkins-(DFL) Sen. James Metzen-(DFL) | 53 | A Rep. Paul Gardner-(DFL) B Rep. Carol McFarlane-(R) Sen. Sandy Rummel-(DFL) | 67 | A Rep. Tim Mahoney-(DFL) B Rep. Sheldon Johnson-(DFL) Sen. Mee Moua-(DFL) |
| 12 | A Rep. John Ward-(DFL) B Rep. Al Doty-(DFL) Sen. Paul Koering-(R) | 26 | A Rep. Connie Ruth-(R) B Rep. Patti Fritz-(DFL) Sen. Dick Day-(R) | 40 | A Rep. Will Morgan-(DFL) B Rep. Ann Lenczewski-(DFL) Sen. John Doll-(DFL) | 54 | A Rep. Mindy Greiling-(DFL) B Rep. Bev Scalze-(DFL) Sen. John Marty-(DFL) | | |
| 13 | A Rep. Bud Heidgerken-(R) B Rep. Al Juhnke-(DFL) Sen. Joe Gimse-(R) | 27 | A Rep. Robin Brown-(DFL) B Rep. Jeanne Poppe-(DFL) Sen. Dan Sparks-(DFL) | 41 | A Rep. Ron Erhardt-(R) B Rep. Neil W. Peterson-(R) Sen. Geoff Michel-(R) | 55 | A Rep. Leon Lillie-(DFL) B Rep. Nora Slawik-(DFL) Sen. Charles (Chuck) Wiger-(DFL) | | |
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Ways to stay connected

From Web to weekly newsmagazine, information abounds

By CRAIG GREEN

So you might have heard on the radio or read in the paper that the Legislature may consider a ban on smoking in public places.

The stories give some background and a couple of interviews from people for and against it, but all of the stories leave you with questions: How close is this to becoming law? What has my representative said or done about this? How can I get my opinion heard? Whose idea was this?

To find answers to these questions, there are many different resources and services that are closer than you might think.

To get answers to general questions regarding the legislative process, including who represents you, call the nonpartisan House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

For those with access to the Internet, there are even more options.

Launched in 1994, the legislative Web site, www.leg.mn, provides a wide range of information, from legislative history to House and Senate schedules to the phone number and e-mail address of your local representative.

Much of this information is also available at www.house.mn or www.senate.mn.

Each member of the House has their own official Web page with contact and biographical information, schedules of town hall meetings, district information and a list of bills he or she has sponsored or co-sponsored.

House publications

House Public Information Services provides a number of publications to make the legislative process easier to understand for ages seven to 70.

In addition to member contact and committee information, the office produces the award-winning Session Weekly that contains

easy-to-understand in-depth coverage of House committees and floor action. Produced by House Public Information Services and mailed out every Friday, the free newsmagazine makes the complicated legislative process clear and concise. To subscribe, go to www.house.mn/hinfo/subscribe.sw.asp, or to view the online version of the latest issue at www.house.mn/hinfo/swmain.asp.

E-mail alerts

The online Session Daily is updated almost everyday during the legislative session, and when information warrants throughout the rest of the year. When something critical happens at the House, subscribers receive an e-mail alert. It's one of the best ways to get the latest information quickly. To subscribe to Session Daily, go to www.house.mn/list/join.asp?listname=sessiondaily.

To track a specific bill through the entire legislative process, one can use MyBills. A free personalized subscription-based service, it provides daily e-mails and RSS notifications on the status of requested House and Senate bills. For information, go to www.house.mn/leg/billslogin.asp.

Streaming audio/video and Podcasts

In addition, the House provides streaming audio and video of committee meetings and floor sessions, as well as Podcasts of select House committee meetings.

For people who are a little less technically inclined, unedited television coverage of all House floor sessions, select committee meetings and press conferences is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on *tpt17* in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and on many cable television channels throughout Minnesota. Television coverage can also be seen via webcast at www.house.mn/htv/schedule.asp.

Frequently used Web sites and phone numbers

Legislature

Main legislative page: www.leg.mn
Find out who represents you: www.leg.mn/leg/districtfinder.asp
Legislative meeting schedule: www.leg.mn/leg/sched.asp
Check bill status: www.leg.mn/leg/legis.htm
Personalized bill tracking: www.house.mn/leg/billslogin.asp
Frequently called numbers: www.house.mn/hinfo/leginfo/freqnum.pdf
Frequently asked questions about the Minnesota Legislature: www.house.mn/leg/faqtoc.asp
House & Senate TV schedule page: www.house.mn/htv/htv.asp

Minnesota House of Representatives

Minnesota House of Representatives home page: www.house.mn
Contact a representative: www.house.mn/members/housemembers.asp
To receive e-mail updates about upcoming meetings or news from the House: www.house.mn/maillist/maillinglist.asp
House bill summaries: www.house.mn/hrd/billsum.asp
Capitol area photographs available in a high-resolution format, suitable for downloading: www.house.mn/hinfo/hsepix.htm

House Public Information Services related pages

House Public Information Services: www.house.mn/hinfo/hinfo.htm
Daily schedule and links to the House's live Internet video streaming: www.house.mn/htv/schedule.asp
Internet video archives of House television programming: www.house.mn/htv/archivesHTV
Internet audio archives of House floor sessions and committee meetings: www.house.mn/audio/default.asp
Session Weekly: www.house.mn/hinfo/swmain.asp
Session Daily: www.house.mn/hinfo/sdaily.asp

Minnesota Senate

Minnesota Senate home page: www.senate.mn
Contact a senator: www.senate.mn/members/member_list.php?sort=a#header
Senate Web casts, live video and archives of past floor sessions or meetings: www.senate.mn/media/index.php#header

Telephone

House information: (800) 657-3550 or (651) 296-2146
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Senate information: (888) 234-1112 or (651) 296-0504;
(651) 296-0250 Metropolitan Area (TTY)
(888) 234-1216 Greater Minnesota (TTY)

Directions, Parking, Tours, Visiting the Legislature, Dining

Directions

The Capitol complex is north of I-94, just minutes from downtown St. Paul. It is accessible from the east and west on I-94, and from the north and south on I-35E.

- I-94 eastbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn left. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-94 westbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn right. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-35E northbound: Exit at Kellogg Boulevard. Turn left. Go to John Ireland Boulevard and turn right.
- I-35E southbound: Exit at University Avenue. Turn right. Go to Rice Street and turn left.

Parking

Public metered parking is available in Lot Q, north of the Capitol at Cedar Street and Sherburne Avenue; Lot AA, across Rice Street from the State Office Building on Aurora Avenue; Lot F, directly behind the Transportation Building; Lot H, west of the Veterans Service Building; Lot K, across from the Armory on Cedar Street (enter from 12th Street); Lot L, east of the Judicial Center; in the 14th Street Lot at the corner of North Robert Street and 14th Street; and on the orange level of the Centennial Office Building Ramp at Cedar Street and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. There are a few metered parking spots in front of the Capitol along Aurora Avenue.

Capitol Security personnel will issue tickets for expired meters.

All-day parking permits may be purchased for \$4 from Plant Management on the ground floor of the Administration Building at 50 Sherburne Ave., north of the Capitol, across University Avenue. Cash or checks are accepted. For more information, call (651) 201-2307.

Outdoor disability parking is available in most public lots within the State Capitol Complex. However, most spots can be found in Lot N and Lot F. Disability parking is also available on the orange level of the Centennial Office Parking Ramp and in the 14th Street Lot.

The main disability entrance to the Capitol is on the northwest side of the building just off Lot N. There also are drop-off entrances on the south side under the front steps on the south side and on the northeast side of the building.

Since parking is limited during legislative sessions, taking the public bus could be an option. Call the Transit Information Center at (612) 373-3333 for schedule and route information.

Visiting the Legislature

During session, all House and Senate floor sessions are open to the public. No pass is required for spectators to sit in the galleries of either chamber. The House is scheduled to meet at 12:30

p.m. on Mondays and 10 a.m. Thursdays. The Senate generally meets at 11 a.m. Mondays and Thursdays. As the session nears the end, however, both bodies may meet several times a week, often into the night.

Visitors interested in observing these sessions may call House Public Information Services (651) 296-2146 or Senate Information (651) 296-0504, with questions.

Committee meetings are open to the public, as well. Visitors wanting to attend a committee meeting may call the committee hotlines for prerecorded messages with the meeting times and agendas for each day: House (651) 296-9283 or Senate (651) 296-8088.

If group members want to meet with their individual legislators or testify before a committee, arrangements should be made at least a week in advance.

Sometimes groups plan a "legislative day" at the Capitol. For information on reserving a room for group conferences, call the State Office Building room scheduler at (651) 296-4279 or the Capitol room scheduler at (651) 296-0866.

Tours

Tours of the Capitol are offered through the Capitol Historic Site Program of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Tour guides lead the 45-minute tours on the hour Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. (last tour leaves at 3 p.m.); Saturday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (last tour leaves at 2 p.m.); and Sunday between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. (last tour leaves at 3 p.m.). The tours begin at the Capitol information desk. Brochures in about 20 foreign languages also are available there.

Tour rates vary. Generally, 45-minute tours for drop-in visitors to the Capitol are free of charge.

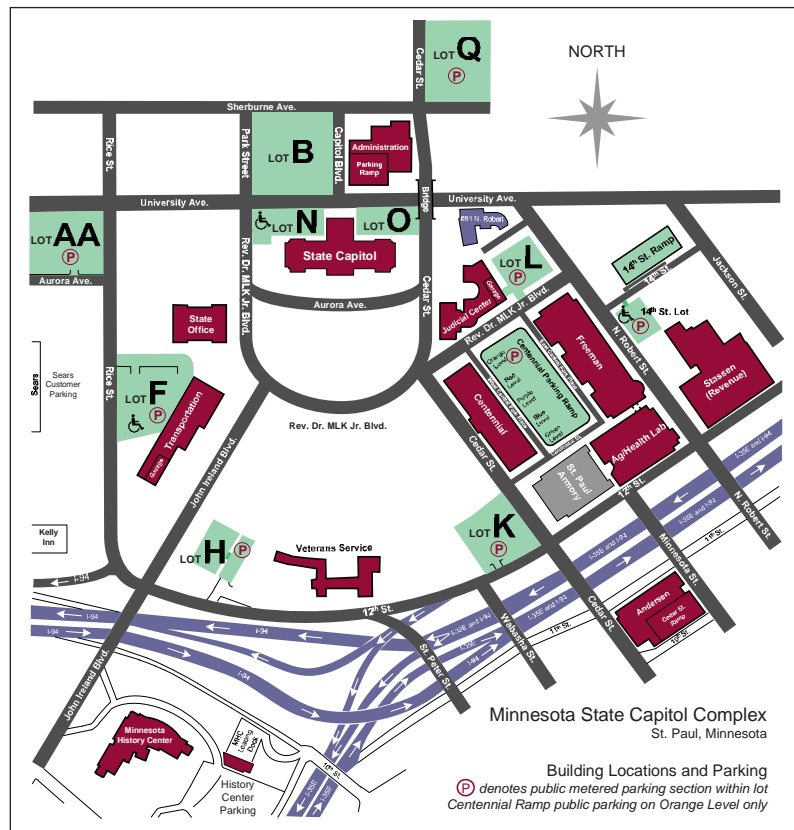
The society offers a number of specialized tours for educational groups ranging from pre-school students to high school seniors. Also, special tour events are scheduled throughout the year. Themes include "Art and Artists of the State Capitol" and "Shadows and Spirits of the State Capitol." Some of these events require admission fees. A special events guide is available upon request.

For more information about the tours and fee structure or to make a reservation, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881.

Dining

Year-round cafeterias can be found on the ground floor of the Transportation, Centennial and Stassen buildings.

The small State Office Building cafeteria and the Rathskeller in the State Capitol are open only when the Legislature is in session.



Edited map courtesy Minnesota Department of Administration, Plant Management Division

Strong support for smoking ban

Citizens also show support for constitutional amendment

If legislators are thinking of instituting a statewide smoking ban, it appears they have the support of Minnesotans.

More than 71 percent of the nearly 6,600 fairgoers participating in the 2006 House of Representatives State Fair poll said they support a statewide smoking ban in bars and restaurants.

Many of the questions raised in the poll reflected issues discussed in the prior legislative sessions and may be discussed again.

The informal and unscientific poll did prove to be an accurate barometer of support for the state constitutional amendment that was approved by 57 percent of voters in November. Approximately two-thirds of those participating in the poll said they would support the amendment to dedicate all funds from the state motor vehicle sales tax to transportation purposes.

Here's a look at the questions and the results.

Note: All percentages are rounded to the nearest one-tenth. Totals are for those that actually voted on the question.

1. Do you support the proposed state constitutional amendment, to be voted on this November, to dedicate all funds from the state Motor Vehicle Sales Tax to transportation purposes?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 66.2% | (4,320) |
| No | 18.2% | (1,188) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 15.5% | (1,014) |

2. Should Minnesota's school year be expanded, with students given a shorter summer vacation and longer breaks during the school year?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 41.3% | (2,699) |
| No | 46.7% | (3,055) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 12% | (782) |

3. Should legislators vote in 2007 on an Anoka County stadium to house the Minnesota Vikings?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 37.4% | (2,434) |
| No | 51.6% | (3,361) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 11% | (717) |

4. Should pharmacists have the option to refuse filling a prescription if they have an ethical, moral or religious objection to a prescribed drug or device?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 21.5% | (1,407) |
| No | 75.2% | (4,917) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 3.3% | (217) |

5. A number of Minnesota cities have banned smoking in bars and restaurants. Do you support a statewide ban?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 71.7% | (4,692) |
| No | 25.9% | (1,697) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 2.4% | (158) |

6. In general, do you support a health impact fee on alcoholic drinks to help offset alcohol-related costs to the state, such as health and safety?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 55.8% | (3,639) |
| No | 36.8% | (2,401) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 7.4% | (481) |

7. Should drivers under the age of 18 be restricted from having more than one passenger under the age of 21, except for immediate family members, in the vehicle?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 52.4% | (3,416) |
| No | 38.6% | (2,519) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 9% | (585) |

8. Would you support a 10-cent per gallon increase in the state gasoline tax to fund transportation improvements?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 41.1% | (2,682) |
| No | 52.4% | (3,419) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 6.5% | (423) |

9. When farmers intend to use pesticides and fertilizers on their fields, should they be required to notify adjacent landowners of the chemicals they plan to use and when they plan to do the application?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 67.8% | (4,419) |
| No | 22.2% | (1,443) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 10% | (652) |

10. Immigrant students who are not legalized citizens and graduate from a Minnesota high school must pay non-resident tuition at most Minnesota public colleges and universities. Should they be permitted to pay the less expensive resident tuition?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 35.7% | (2,331) |
| No | 57% | (3,721) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 7.2% | (469) |

11. Should new graduates in dentistry, family practice medicine or pharmacy receive some kind of incentive, such as housing assistance or lower student loan repayment rates, to practice in Greater Minnesota for at least three years?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 67% | (4,369) |
| No | 22.6% | (1,477) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 10.4% | (676) |

12. Should veterans' military pensions be exempt from state income taxes?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 57.8% | (3,774) |
| No | 30.6% | (2,000) |
| Undecided/No Opinion | 11.6% | (755) |

13. What is your favorite food on a stick at the state fair?

| | | |
|----------------------|-------|---------|
| Deep-fried candy bar | 4.7% | (287) |
| Pickle | 5.3% | (326) |
| Pronto Pup | 36.2% | (2,226) |
| Pork chop | 16.3% | (1,001) |
| Sausage | 2.8% | (171) |
| Other | 34.7% | (2,135) |

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER
MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH
MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota House 2007

| | |
|--|-------------|
| DFL members at start of the 2007 session | 85 |
| Republican members | 49 |
| Republican seat majority at the start of 2005 session | 2 |
| In 2003 | 29 |
| In 2001 | 4 |
| Last biennium that the DFL controlled the House | 1997-98 |
| Number of men in the House | 91 |
| DFL men | 50 |
| Republican men | 41 |
| Number of women in the House | 43 |
| DFL women | 35 |
| Republican women | 8 |
| Number of women at the start of 2003-04, 2005-06 biennia | 31, 37 |
| Term for longest serving House members (Lyndon Carlson and Phyllis Kahn) | 18 |
| Number of freshman House members | 35 |
| DFL | 29 |
| Republicans | 6 |
| Men | 20 |
| Women | 15 |
| Freshman members at start of 2003-04, 2005-06 biennia | 43, 26 |
| Current House members not serving in previous biennium, as percent | 26.1 |
| Percent in 2005 | 19.4 |
| Percent in 2003 | 32.1 |
| Number of incumbents re-elected in November 2006 | 99 |
| Number who were not | 12 |
| Open seats | 23 |
| Number of candidates who won by 51-60 votes | 4 |
| Fewest votes cast among the four races | 15, 156 |
| Vote difference in closest race (Paul Gardner-53A) | 51 |
| Votes cast in that race | 18, 347 |
| Votes cast in Minnesota on Election Day 2006 | 2, 217, 818 |
| Votes cast in 2004 | 2, 842, 912 |

Sources: House Public Information Services and Office of the Secretary of State

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For general information, call House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

To have a copy of Session Weekly mailed to you, subscribe online at: www.house.mn/hinfo/subscribe.asp or call: (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

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To obtain a copy of a bill, call the Chief Clerk's Office at (651) 296-2314.

To find out about bill introductions or the status of a specific bill, call the House Index Office at (651) 296-6646.

The House of Representatives can be found on the Web at: www.house.mn.

People who are deaf and hard of hearing may ask questions or leave messages by calling the Minnesota Relay service at 711 or (800) 627-3529 (TTY).

Check your local listings to watch television coverage of House committees, floor sessions and select press conferences.

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Members of the 2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives.

— Photo illustration by Andrew VonBank.

First bills reflect majority's agenda

Health care for children put at the top of the heap



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The first bill introduced this biennium would provide health care for all children in Minnesota.

By MIA SIMPSON

It was a nail-biter for those close to state politics. “The hoppers,” some office bins designated for bill proposals before they are assigned to committees, sat empty until just a few minutes before Friday’s submission deadline. A missed deadline can mean bills have to wait a couple of days before being introduced. And the first bills of the session, can be a forecast of the majority’s priorities for the months to come.

In four of its first seven bills this 2007-08 session, DFL leadership focused on concerns that include health care and education. HF1

seeks to provide health care for all Minnesota children. The bill is an adaptation of the so-called “Children’s Health Security Act,” which was introduced last year by Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) and again this year.

“The goal is to get all Minnesota’s children covered. We’re moving in the general direction of removing barriers to coverage,” Thissen said. Barriers can include a 25- to 30-page application form and a four-month wait for coverage once a family is approved.

Thissen, who chairs the House Health and Human Services Committee, said the bill mirrors his initial proposal in key ways,

including a two-phase approach that will cover the neediest children first — those whose families earn below 300 percent of poverty guidelines — before becoming available to all children in 2010. He said a task force will be appointed to sort out how best to ensure coverage for all children, a provision that was not included in last year’s bill.

According to DFL leadership, the bill was chosen as HF1 for several reasons, including its leading position on the party’s campaign platform, an understood public need and,

First Reading continued on page 4

like several other House files, expected cost-savings in the future.

"Today, we're not just talking the talk, we're walking the walk with these bills," House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) said during a Jan. 8 press conference. "This is one of the top issues facing Minnesota families, many of whom fear they are potentially one health care crisis away from a financial crisis." The press conference, along with the Republican response, can be viewed at http://www.house.mn/hvt/archivesPRESS.asp?ls_year=85.

The issue — health care coverage for children — has also received support from Gov. Pawlenty and House Republicans, a rarity in past sessions.

"I think we all have the same goals when it comes to education, property taxes and health care, we may just have different ways of getting there," said House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm).

Other top bills relate to all-day, every-day kindergarten (HF2); property tax relief (HF3); increased renewable energy statewide (HF4); funding restoration and some increases for early education programs (HF5); increase in K-12 education funding (HF6); and the so-called "Lights-On Bill" (HF7), which will prevent aspects of government shutdown in the future if the Legislature cannot establish a budget before the new fiscal year begins.

Kelliher referenced a few funding sources for these bills, including the projected \$2 billion state surplus, and efforts to enforce greater tax compliance, but has no price tag

First in the hopper

When discussing the relevance of HF1, some legislators use the phrase "insider baseball," which essentially means the decision matters more to people inside the Capitol than out.

"The public doesn't care whether it's file 1 or file 991," said Rep. Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon), who served as House speaker for the last eight years.

The degree to which the first House files make a statement varies. The first bill of the House in 2003, for instance, which forced permanent and non-permanent foreign residents to include the status of their residency on their driver's licenses, was in direct response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It was approved by the House, but not the Senate.

Some "first files" are in response to heated state issues. In 1987, the first bill offered salvation to family farms, which had closed at rapid rates due to troubles in the agricultural industry the previous year. During the 1985-86 biennium, protests on behalf of the issue hit the Capitol hard, with several

legislators participating in a hunger strike.

The murder of 22-year-old Dru Sjodin in 2003 incited the first House file in 2005, which included a provision requiring life sentences for specified sexual assault crimes. The bill was ultimately signed into law.

In contrast, some first bills appear to have little public meaning. In 1985, the first legislation in the "hopper" sought to consolidate International Falls and South International Falls. For three separate biennia — 1933, 1935, and 1941 — House File 1 appropriated money for payment of the lieutenant governor and the salaries and mileage of state legislators and Capitol staff.

Several other notables include HF1 in 1973, which forced the Legislature to convene both years of the biennium; HF1 in 1929, which designated polling hours for primary and general elections; and HF1 in 1979, which abdicated the state from paying for the construction of the Metrodome.

for the plans. Thissen said the cost for the health care bill would be "in the hundreds of millions of dollars."

That is too vague for Republican leadership.

"We would like more details as a caucus," said House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall).

Seifert also expressed concern about the general philosophy that moves the onus of health and health care from the person to the state.

"If the government is going to pay for your health care, why should you be healthy?" he said. "We would prefer a market-based form first and government as a last resort."


Seifert's view represents a fundamental chasm between the DFL and Republicans. He notes that of the bill's 34 sponsors, only

one, Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover), is Republican.

Thissen and Sertich contend that the type of system they are proposing better assures that children get the care they need.

"This is a model where we have a societal interest in providing all children access to a doctor," Thissen said.

Thissen cited his children as the motivators in his original decision to sponsor the proposed legislation.

"I have three kids of my own, and I know how important access to health care is to them and our family," he said. "I don't think it's fair that some children don't have access to a doctor." 

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E-mail: attorney.general@state.mn.us
Consumer Division
1400 Bremer Tower
445 Minnesota St.
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 296-3353
(800) 657-3787
TTY (651) 297-7206
TTY (800) 366-4812

Secretary of State

MARK RITCHIE (DFL)

Election Center
Room 180 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
(651) 215-1440
(877) 600-8683
Business Services
Suite 100
60 Empire Drive
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 296-2803
(877) 551-6767
Web site: www.sos.state.mn.us
E-mail: secretary.state@state.mn.us

State Auditor

REBECCA OTTO (DFL)

525 Park St.
Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55103
(651) 296-2551
TTY (800) 627-3529
Web site: www.osa.state.mn.us
E-mail: state.auditor@state.mn.us

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of selected bills heard in House committees held Jan. 4-10 and other House activity.

GOVERNMENT

Legislator per diem increase

For the second time in three years, House members are eligible for a per diem increase.

On a 22-4 vote Jan. 10, the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee approved the increase for miscellaneous living expenses from \$66 to \$77 per day. Members were at \$56 per day before an increase in 2005.

Still, it is less than the increase from \$66 to \$96 that the Senate Rules and Administration Committee approved for its body.

"It's something that's overdue," said Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), who added that collecting per diem is a voluntary request. "I think that we're all entitled to a little cost-of-living raise now and then. The folks across the Capitol have exceeded our expectations here, but they're bigger eaters."

Since 1998, members have been paid an annual salary of \$31,140, but they can be reimbursed for travel and lodging when away from home.

In addition, the House increased its housing benefit for members from districts more than 50 miles from the Capitol. Now members are eligible for up to \$1,200 a month for "lodging expenses" all year, instead of just six months a year, as was the case. The Senate has had a year-round allowance for a number of years.

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), who voted against the increase along with Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie), Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover) and Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), said the approval violates Article 4, Section 9 of the Minnesota Constitution, which states that "No increase of compensation shall take effect during the period for which the members of the existing house of representatives may have been elected."

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) said there is a difference between per diem living expenses, which this addresses, and salary.

"If \$77 a day is what's necessary to pay for food, then that's some awful rich eating," said Buesgens, who believes legislators should be paid higher compensation.

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Former governors, from left, Arne Carlson and Al Quie, former U.S. Rep. Martin Sabo, and former Gov. Wendell Anderson speak about the changing role of state legislatures during the 2007 Legislative Conference held Jan. 9 at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

Chisholm) offered, and then withdrew, an amendment that any member "voting against or abstaining from voting for this resolution is prohibited from receiving the per diem and housing payments." He said this occurs in other states, including Missouri.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Golden Gopher parachutes

At least two legislators do not believe state money should be used as compensation for unsuccessful coaches.

Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) plans to introduce a bill that would prohibit any state appropriation to the University of Minnesota from being "used directly or indirectly for costs related to the early termination of a contract of any person who reports to the director of athletics."

Her announcement comes less than two weeks after Glen Mason was dismissed as Gopher football coach. He reportedly left with a \$2.2 million buyout and \$1.6 million in deferred compensation. Former men's basketball coach Dan Monson reportedly got a check for \$1.35 million when he resigned Nov. 30.

"When students ask for a Hail Mary for tuition relief, the university spends all this money to get rid of two coaches who didn't

do their jobs," Peppin said at a Jan. 9 news conference. "This does not send the right message to students."

University Athletic Director Joel Maturi said the money will come from his department, but that he may need a short-term loan from central administration to help with the compensation.

Administration gets its money from tuition and the state, said House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall). "This is about golden parachutes, not Goldy Gopher."

"First and foremost, no tax or tuition dollars will be used to fund the \$3.5 million buyout of the contract for coaches Mason and Monson. Those amounts will be paid entirely by revenues to the athletics department through ticket sales, licensing and other means," university spokesman Daniel Wolter said in a statement.

Peppin and Seifert sent a letter requesting a hearing by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee to the division chairman, Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia).

Because of the university's constitutional autonomy, Rukavina said there isn't much the state can do. He is not adverse to allowing Seifert and Peppin to question officials during a university presentation.

According to its Web site, the university is seeking \$123.4 million in new funding for the upcoming fiscal biennium, beginning July 1, 2007, to "help to ensure the University's continued excellence and help it to build for the future of the University and of the state." The university also proposes a 4.5 percent tuition increase each year.

College cost concerns

Many legislators heard about increased college costs while campaigning.

Members of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee heard more concerns during their first committee meeting Jan. 10. No action was taken.

Five students from two-year rural technical and community colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system spoke of the problems they have making ends meet while going to school, and how much debt they expect to have if or when they receive their diploma.

Students from similar schools in the Twin Cities metropolitan area testified the next day. Division chairman Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) said he anticipates taking testimony from students from four-year MnSCU institutions, the University of Minnesota and private colleges.

"Higher education is a cornerstone of Minnesota's vitality, both economically and

socially. Yet, over the past decade changes have been made that have led to the degradation of this important institution," said David Attarsaheli, a sales and management student at St. Cloud Technical College. "Now is the time to fix the problems, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because the costs of fixing them would later be astronomical both financially and socially."

Attarsaheli has taken out \$3,000 in loans for this academic year, and he works about 25 hours a week. Yet, he considers himself lucky.

"I have several friends and fellow students who work in excess of 50 hours per week and maintain full course loads," he said. "Their jobs don't pay as well as mine and they can't get financial aid because their parents make too much."

The financial burden has left some to wonder if the effort is worth the reward.

"When we come out with a mortgage payment and no house, that leaves us in a really detrimental position to try to achieve our goals," said Jacob Littler, who attends Mesabi Range Community and Technical College.

TECHNOLOGY

Bioscience industry urges support

Minnesota will have to fight to keep its edge in the bioscience industry.

State of the State address

Gov. Tim Pawlenty is scheduled to deliver his State of the State address to a joint meeting of the Minnesota House and Senate at noon, Jan. 17, from the House Chamber. The event is scheduled to be televised on *tp17* in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and on some local cable channels in Greater Minnesota. Web streaming of the address can be accessed at <http://www.house.mn/htv/schedule.asp>.

That was the message presented to the [House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee](#) at its first official meeting Jan. 10. It took no action.

BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota Chairman Dale Wahlstrom warned that bioscience-related industries are experiencing a rapid "convergence" of technologies that is forcing companies to shift geographic locations and might lure some biotech business out of the state.

"The companies will figure out a way to deal with this," Wahlstrom said. "They will have to go to where the knowledge is, so the fact that our companies will do well does not mean that the state will do well."

Phil Griffin, a contract lobbyist with LifeScience Alley, urged the state to support bioscience by fostering a trained and educated workforce, and by actively encouraging research, commercialization and economic development in the bioscience community.

"We're no longer, as you all know, competing with Wisconsin and Iowa and South and North Dakota," Griffin said. "The kind of work that goes on is being done across the globe, and those are the kinds of people that we're competing with."

Griffin stopped short of unveiling a full legislative agenda to the committee, but said he intends to do so soon.

LifeScience Alley President and CEO Don Gerhardt testified to the economic benefits of a strong bioscience industry presence in the state. He said approximately 520 biotech companies in the state, employing some 50,000 employees, generate an estimated \$40 billion to \$50 billion in business every year.

Praising bioscience and related industries as an "engine of jobs and growth" for the state, Committee Chair [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) urged committee members to approach bioscience legislation from a bipartisan viewpoint.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina, *third from right*, chairman of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee talked with students and organization members from rural two-year MnSCU technical and community colleges after hearing testimony Jan. 10 on the effects of high tuition and their future debt. Those meeting with Rukavina are, *from left*, Tom Roddetz, David Attarsaheli, Jessica Medearis, Karen Bidwell, Maggie Jonas, Jacob Littler and Tyler Slinger.

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

Call House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

TAXES

Federal tax compliance

The House has passed its first bill and thousands of Minnesotans could benefit from tax deductions for 2006.

Sponsored by Rep. Sandy Wollschlager (DFL-Cannon Falls), HF8 conforms Minnesota's income tax to federal income tax changes enacted since the 2006 House session concluded.

Approved 132-0 Jan. 11, the bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Thomas Bakk (DFL-Cook) is the sponsor.

Wollschlager said the changes would increase the tuition expense deduction up to \$4,000 and the teacher classroom expense deduction up to \$250; allow military personnel to count tax-exempt combat pay as earned income for the purpose of qualifying to make tax deductible contributions to IRAs; and allow people age 70 ½ years and older to make direct charitable contributions from an IRA to a charity. The bill would affect 2006 income tax returns only.

Rep. Morrie Lanning (DFL-Moorhead) said in spite of the "fast track" to move the bill, some people might still file their tax returns before the bill is signed into law. He asked that direct notification be sent to those who need to amend their returns.

"Most people don't file this soon," said Jack Mansun, assistant commissioner of tax policy and external relations with the Minnesota



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Jack Mansun, assistant commissioner of tax policy and external relations with the Department of Revenue, testifies before the House Taxes Committee Jan. 8 in favor of a bill that would conform state income tax to federal changes enacted since the Legislature adjourned last year. Also pictured is Rep. Sandy Wollschlager, the bill sponsor.

INTERACTIVE DANCE



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Heather Klopchin and Gabriel Anderson of ARENA Dances demonstrate how interactive video technology is being used by the Minnesota Shubert Performing Arts and Education Center to bring art education programs to Minnesota classrooms. The demonstration was presented to legislators during the 2007 Legislative Conference Jan. 9 at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

Department of Revenue. "Most don't get their W-2's until the end of January."

He said those that do would be notified of what steps to take to amend their return. Also, tax preparers would be notified of the changes via electronic newsletter and e-file programs would also be updated. The deadline for making changes to software for this tax season is Jan. 12.

"We need to correct the form and get it into the hands of parents, teachers and combat

veterans," said Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), the House Taxes Committee chairwoman. "We should do this now to save the headache."

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

Is bigger better?

House leaders differ on the value of more committees

By **MIKE COOK**

Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division of the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

And, who can say the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee without taking a breath?

More than a mouthful of alphabet soup, these are three examples of the new House committee structure.

With the DFL now in control, the number of committees and divisions totals 35 — an increase of eight from the last biennium, when Republicans were in control. House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) defends the move and says the new committee structure allows for more involvement from members and the public, without increasing staff.

Further, he said the new structure permits the targeting of three issues his party believes should be closely examined this biennium, including early childhood education. “I think it’s of the utmost importance that we have

the opportunity to focus exclusively on those issues of our earliest learners and the youngest members of the state of Minnesota.”

Before temporary rules were passed on Opening Day, however, House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) called the additional committees an expansion of government and a way to prohibit many Minnesotans from taking part in the entire process.

“We have people from the public — from northwestern Minnesota, from northeastern Minnesota, from southwest and southeast — that would like to testify before committees to help shape the bills,” he said. Now, Seifert said an education bill could “go from a division to an education committee to a finance committee to a ways and means committee to a rules committee to get to the House floor. You’re talking about someone who has an interest in rural Minnesota having to drive back and forth from the Capitol as much as four, five, six, eight hours each time to testify on a bill.”

There are several new committee divisions this biennium which will help legislators focus on specific issues, Sertich said. He cited

the mental health division as an example. “For far too long we have put those issues by the wayside, and by setting up a division we are going to be able to focus like a laser on issues dealing with mental health and have involvement from members, staff and the state of Minnesota. The third is bioscience and emerging technologies. As we are trying to be competitive in this global economy I think it is important that we set aside time to look at those emerging issues.”

Committees are scheduled to begin most days at 8 a.m. On Monday, Tuesday and Thursday they will meet until 5:30 p.m. While they begin earlier and end later, the schedule does call for a half-hour morning break and a lunch hour from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Some divisions are scheduled to meet Friday mornings. Session is planned for Mondays from 12:30 to 2 p.m. and Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. A caucus is scheduled for late afternoon on Wednesdays.

Seifert said the schedule is not as “family friendly” as the one used the last two biennia.

“We didn’t have anything before noon Mondays and nothing on Fridays so non-metro members could spend more time back in their districts,” he said.

Still, Seifert is happy with the placement of Republican members on committees.

“Margaret did a good job of accepting what

Committees continued on page 23



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Members of the House Ways and Means Committee listen to Finance Commissioner Tom Hanson and State Economist Tom Stinson explain the ins and outs of a revenue forecast during a Jan. 8 hearing.

Committee Information

2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives

Member Assignments as of 1/9/07

Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs

445 State Office Building296-3201
Meets: Mondays at 2:15 p.m. and Wednesdays at 8:00 a.m. in the Basement Hearing Room*

Members: 13

Chair: Otremba-DFL

Vice Chair: Faust-DFL

Republican Lead: Hamilton-R

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Brown-DFL | Hosch-DFL |
| Doty-DFL | Juhnke-DFL |
| Eken-DFL | Morrow-DFL |
| Finstad-R | Shimanski-R |
| Heidgerken-R | Urdahl-R |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Katherine Beyer296-9468

Committee Legislative Assistant

Mary Larson296-5486

Veterans Affairs Division

439 State Office Building296-4346
Meets: Fridays at 8:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 12

Chair: Koenen-DFL

Vice Chair: Tinglestad-R

Republican Lead: Wardlow-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Bigham-DFL | Olson-R |
| Dettmer-R | Severson-R |
| Dominguez-DFL | Wollschlager-DFL |
| Doty-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Haws-DFL | Otremba-DFL |
| Hosch-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Katherine Beyer296-9468

Committee Legislative Assistant

Kent Berg297-5723

Biosciences and Emerging Technology

591 State Office Building296-4277
Meets: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 11

Chair: Mahoney-DFL

Vice Chair: Norton-DFL

Republican Lead: Beard-R

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Berns-R | Peppin-R |
| Bunn-DFL | Ruth-R |
| Haws-DFL | Thissen-DFL |
| Masin-DFL | Winkler-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Joanna Dornfeld296-9302

Committee Legislative Assistant

Autumn Williams-Wussow296-8187

Commerce and Labor

503 State Office Building296-4192
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. in the Basement Hearing Room*

Members: 17

Chair: Atkins-DFL

Vice Chair: Lillie-DFL

Republican Lead: Zellers-R

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Anderson, S.-R | Knuth-DFL |
| Anzelc-DFL | Mahoney-DFL |
| Berns-R | Mullery-DFL |
| Davnie-DFL | Paulsen-R |
| DeLaForest-R | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Dominguez-DFL | Simpson-R |
| Johnson-DFL | Tillberry-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Elizabeth Emerson296-7175

Committee Legislative Assistant

John Reich296-6586

Labor and

Consumer Protection Division

545 State Office Building296-0173
Meets: Fridays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 5*

Members: 14

Chair: Davnie-DFL

Vice Chair: Benson-DFL

Republican Lead: Gunther-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Anderson, S.-R | Peterson, N.-R |
| Dittrich-DFL | Scalze-DFL |
| Fritz-DFL | Shimanski-R |
| Hornstein-DFL | Swails-DFL |
| Howes-R | ex-officio** |
| Laine-DFL | Atkins-DFL |
| Nelson-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Elizabeth Emerson296-7175

Committee Legislative Assistant

Mary Faust296-4321

Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division

549 State Office Building296-4201
Meets: Fridays at 8:00 a.m. in Room 5*

Members: 11

Chair: Johnson-DFL

Vice Chair: Masin-DFL

Republican Lead: Hoppe-R

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| Beard-R | Sailer-DFL |
| Garofalo-R | Shimanski-R |
| Hilty-DFL | Thissen-DFL |
| Juhnke-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Morrow-DFL | Atkins-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Elizabeth Emerson296-7175

Committee Legislative Assistant

Mary Faust296-4321

This list is subject to change.

E-12 Education

563 State Office Building296-9714

Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 a.m. in the Basement Hearing Room*

Members: 25

Chair: Mariani-DFL

Vice Chair: Dittrich-DFL

Republican Lead: Erickson-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Abeler-R | Nornes-R |
| Benson-DFL | Peterson, S.-DFL |
| Brown-DFL | Slawik-DFL |
| Davnie-DFL | Slocum-DFL |
| Demmer-R | Swails-DFL |
| Dettmer-R | Tillberry-DFL |
| Gottwalt-R | Urdahl-R |
| Greiling-DFL | Ward-DFL |
| Heidgerken-R | Wardlow-R |
| Hornstein-DFL | Welti-DFL |
| Hosch-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Laine-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Christina Gosack296-5524

Committee Legislative Assistant

Celeste Marin296-9115

Environment and Natural Resources

575 State Office Building296-9918

Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 5*

Members: 18

Chair: Eken-DFL

Vice Chair: Hansen-DFL

Republican Lead: Hackbarth-R

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Brynaert-DFL | Olin-DFL |
| Cornish-R | Ozment-R |
| Dill-DFL | Sailer-DFL |
| Gardner-DFL | Scalze-DFL |
| Hoppe-R | Thao-DFL |
| Mariani-DFL | Tingelstad-R |
| McNamara-R | Wagenius-DFL |
| Moe-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Kirk Koudelka296-6937

Committee Legislative Assistant

A.J. Duerr296-4172

Game, Fish and Forestry Division

571 State Office Building296-2190

Meets: Mondays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 10*

Members: 13

Chair: Dill-DFL

Vice Chair: Knuth-DFL

Republican Lead: Cornish-R

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| Bigham-DFL | Moe-DFL |
| Hackbarth-R | Morrow-DFL |
| Hansen-DFL | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Hoppe-R | Simpson-R |
| McNamara-R | Wagenius-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Kirk Koudelka296-6937

Committee Legislative Assistant

Joan Harrison296-7881

Ethics

343 State Office Building296-2676

Meets: At the call of the chair in (No Room Assigned)*

Members: 4

Chair: Murphy, M.-DFL

Vice Chair: Smith-R

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Holberg-R | (A)Liebling-DFL |
| Simon-DFL | (A)Peterson, N.-R |
| | (A) alternate |

Staff

Committee Administrator

NA296-5360

Committee Legislative Assistant

Phil Chen296-5360

Finance

479 State Office Building296-4255

Meets: Mondays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 40

Chair: Carlson-DFL

Vice Chair: Sailer-DFL

Republican Lead: Sviggum-R

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Anderson, B.-R | Kohls-R |
| Clark-DFL | Lenczewski-DFL |
| Cornish-R | Lieder-DFL |
| Erhardt-R | Mahoney-DFL |
| Finstad-R | Mariani-DFL |
| Garofalo-R | Murphy, M.-DFL |
| Greiling-DFL | Otremba-DFL |
| Hackbarth-R | Paymar-DFL |
| Hausman-DFL | Pelowski-DFL |
| Hilty-DFL | Peppin-R |
| Howes-R | Poppe-DFL |
| Huntley-DFL | Rukavina-DFL |
| Jaros-DFL | Seifert-R |
| Juhnke-DFL | Sertich-DFL |
| Kahn-DFL | Severson-R |

Simon-DFL

Slawik-DFL

Solberg-DFL

Thissen-DFL

Wagenius-DFL

Walker-DFL

Westrom-R

Staff

Committee Administrator

Joanna Dornfeld296-9302

Committee Legislative Assistant

Lill Pohlkamp296-9552

Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division

485 State Office Building296-6206

Meets: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. in the Basement Hearing Room*

Members: 14

Chair: Juhnke-DFL

Vice Chair: Welti-DFL

Republican Lead: Finstad-R

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Doty-DFL | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Faust-DFL | Poppe-DFL |
| Hamilton-R | Shimanski-R |
| Hansen-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Heidgerken-R | Carlson-DFL |
| Magnus-R | ex-officio** |
| Olin-DFL | Solberg-DFL |
| Otremba-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Katherine Beyer296-9468

Committee Legislative Assistant

Dana Wilson296-5992

Capital Investment Finance Division

453 State Office Building296-3824

Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:15 p.m. in the Basement Hearing Room*

Members: 19

Chair: Hausman-DFL

Vice Chair: Scalze-DFL

Republican Lead: Tingelstad-R

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Berns-R | Mahoney-DFL |
| Carlson-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |
| Dean-R | Pelowski-DFL |
| Hansen-DFL | Peterson, N.-R |
| Howes-R | Rukavina-DFL |
| Juhnke-DFL | Solberg-DFL |
| Lanning-R | Urdahl-R |
| Lieder-DFL | Wagenius-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jenny Nash296-4122

Committee Legislative Assistant

Laurie Nistl296-5497

Early Childhood Learning Finance Division

403 State Office Building296-7807
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 200*

Members: 14

Chair: Slawik-DFL

Vice Chair: Bly-DFL

Republican Lead: Eastlund-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Fritz-DFL | Peterson, S.-DFL |
| Garofalo-R | Ward-DFL |
| Gottwalt-R | Wardlow-R |
| Kranz-DFL | Winkler-DFL |
| Laine-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Murphy, E.-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |
| Nornes-R | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Sara Benzkofer.....296-4305

Committee Legislative Assistant

Tricia Kiefer296-4483

Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division

343 State Office Building296-2676
Meets: Mondays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 5*

Members: 24

Chair: Murphy, M.-DFL

Vice Chair: Peterson, S.-DFL

Republican Lead: Demmer-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Abeler-R | Pelowski-DFL |
| Brown-DFL | Rukavina-DFL |
| Bunn-DFL | Ruth-R |
| Eastlund-R | Ruud-DFL |
| Erickson-R | Slawik-DFL |
| Garofalo-R | Tillberry-DFL |
| Greiling-DFL | Ward-DFL |
| Hamilton-R | Wardlow-R |
| Heidgerken-R | ex-officio** |
| Hornstein-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Kranz-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Mariani-DFL | Solberg-DFL |
| Masin-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Christina Gosack.....296-5524

Committee Legislative Assistant

Phil Chen296-5360

Energy Finance and Policy Division

559 State Office Building296-4308
Meets: Mondays and Wednesdays at 2:15 p.m. in Room 200*

Members: 21

Chair: Hilty-DFL

Vice Chair: Ruud-DFL

Republican Lead: Westrom-R

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Beard-R | Nornes-R |
| Bly-DFL | Ozment-R |
| Brynaert-DFL | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Gardner-DFL | Sailer-DFL |
| Gunther-R | Slocum-DFL |
| Hackbarth-R | Wagenius-DFL |
| Hoppe-R | Welti-DFL |
| Johnson-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Kalin-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Knuth-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Magnus-R | Solberg-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Andy Pomroy296-4180

Committee Legislative Assistant

Rebekah Smith296-8879

Environment and

Natural Resources Finance Division

449 State Office Building296-4200
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 a.m. in Room 5*

Members: 19

Chair: Wagenius-DFL

Vice Chair: Doty-DFL

Republican Lead: Ozment-R

| | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| Anzelc-DFL | Magnus-R |
| Clark-DFL | McNamara-R |
| Dill-DFL | Moe-DFL |
| Eken-DFL | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Gardner-DFL | Scalze-DFL |
| Gunther-R | Tingelstad-R |
| Hackbarth-R | ex-officio** |
| Hansen-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Hoppe-R | ex-officio** |
| Knuth-DFL | Solberg-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jenna Duwenhoeffer296-1774

Committee Legislative Assistant

Melissa Hysing.....296-3367

Health Care and

Human Services Finance Division

585 State Office Building296-2228
Meets: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. in Room 200*

Members: 21

Chair: Huntley-DFL

Vice Chair: Hosch-DFL

Republican Lead: Abeler-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Anderson, B.-R | Peppin-R |
| Brod-R | Peterson, S.-DFL |
| Bunn-DFL | Ruud-DFL |
| Dean-R | Slawik-DFL |
| Erickson-R | Thao-DFL |
| Fritz-DFL | Thissen-DFL |
| Gottwalt-R | Walker-DFL |
| Liebling-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Loeffler-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Murphy, E.-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Otremba-DFL | Solberg-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jenn Holcomb296-6422

Committee Legislative Assistant

Jan Horner.....296-5496

Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division

477 State Office Building296-0170
Meets: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. in Room 5*

Members: 20

Chair: Rukavina-DFL

Vice Chair: Poppe-DFL

Republican Lead Workforce: Gunther-R

Republican Lead Higher Ed.: Nornes-R

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Atkins-DFL | McFarlane-R |
| Bly-DFL | Moe-DFL |
| Brynaert-DFL | Norton-DFL |
| Clark-DFL | Ruth-R |
| Dettmer-R | Severson-R |
| Eastlund-R | Slocum-DFL |
| Haws-DFL | Welti-DFL |
| Hortman-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Mahoney-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jim Gelbmann296-7427

Committee Legislative Assistant

Sue Scott296-8827

Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division
 471 State Office Building296-0294
Meets: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 5*

Members: 16
Chair: Clark-DFL
Vice Chair: Kranz-DFL
Republican Lead: Severson-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Anderson, B.-R | Morgan-DFL |
| Benson-DFL | Peterson, N.-R |
| Eastlund-R | Swails-DFL |
| Huntley-DFL | Tschumper-DFL |
| Laine-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Madore-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| McFarlane-R | ex-officio** |
| McNamara-R | Solberg-DFL |
| Moe-DFL | |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Brooke Bordson296-5528
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Lauren Benditt296-5998

K-12 Finance Division
 381 State Office Building296-5387
Meets: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 2:15 p.m. in Room 10*

Members: 21
Chair: Greiling-DFL
Vice Chair: Morrow-DFL
Republican Lead: Heidgerken-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Anzelc-DFL | Garofalo-R |
| Benson-DFL | Hilstrom-DFL |
| Brown-DFL | Mariani-DFL |
| Davnie-DFL | Marquart-DFL |
| Demmer-R | McFarlane-R |
| Dettmer-R | Morgan-DFL |
| Dittrich-DFL | Olson-R |
| Dominguez-DFL | Swails-DFL |
| Erickson-R | ex-officio** |
| Faust-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Shannon Patrick.....296-5098
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Elizabeth Mandelman296-9676

Minnesota Heritage Finance Division
 583 State Office Building296-4246
Meets: Mondays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 200*

Members: 14
Chair: Jaros-DFL
Vice Chair: Gardner-DFL
Republican Lead: Urdahl-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Anderson, B.-R | Nornes-R |
| Bly-DFL | Peterson, N.-R |
| Dean-R | Sailer-DFL |
| Eken-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Johnson-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Kahn-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Laine-DFL | Solberg-DFL |
| Madore-DFL | |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Christine Murphy296-5491
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Diogo Reis296-3889

Public Safety Finance Division
 543 State Office Building296-4199
Meets: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8:00 a.m. in Room 10*

Members: 17
Chair: Paymar-DFL
Vice Chair: Olin-DFL
Republican Lead: Smith-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Bigham-DFL | Liebling-DFL |
| Buesgens-R | Lillie-DFL |
| Cornish-R | Mullery-DFL |
| Dominguez-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |
| Eastlund-R | Zellers-R |
| Haws-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Hilstrom-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Kohls-R | ex-officio** |
| Lesch-DFL | Solberg-DFL |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Melanie LaComb.....296-4141
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Libby Wyrum296-5999

State Government Finance Division
 365 State Office Building296-4257
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:15 p.m. in Room 5*

Members: 13
Chair: Kahn-DFL
Vice Chair: Ward-DFL
Republican Lead: DeLaForest-R

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Anderson, S.-R | Winkler-DFL |
| Bigham-DFL | Zellers-R |
| Hilty-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Hortman-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Lesch-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Peppin-R | Pelowski-DFL |
| Poppe-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Sviggum-R | Solberg-DFL |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Brian Shekleton296-4110
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Krysta Niedernhofer296-7173

Transportation Finance Division
 423 State Office Building296-5091
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. in Room 10*

Members: 18
Chair: Lieder-DFL
Vice Chair: Erhardt-R
Republican Lead: Magnus-R

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Beard-R | Morrow-DFL |
| Doty-DFL | Nelson-DFL |
| Hausman-DFL | Ruth-R |
| Holberg-R | Severson-R |
| Hornstein-DFL | Slocum-DFL |
| Hortman-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Kalin-DFL | Carlson-DFL |
| Madore-DFL | ex-officio** |
| Masin-DFL | Solberg-DFL |
| Morgan-DFL | |

Staff
Committee Administrator
 Abbey Mahin296-5413
Committee Legislative Assistant
 Susie Maher296-5494

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections

491 State Office Building296-8637
Meets: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
 at 8:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 16

Chair: Pelowski-DFL

Vice Chair: Morgan-DFL

Republican Lead: Howes-R

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Anderson, S.-R | Olson-R |
| Brod-R | Peterson, N.-R |
| Emmer-R | Poppe-DFL |
| Hilty-DFL | Simon-DFL |
| Kahn-DFL | Winkler-DFL |
| Kalin-DFL | Wollschlager-DFL |
| Nelson-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Mark Mallander296-5389

Committee Legislative Assistant

Kathy L. Anderson.....296-3806

Health and Human Services

351 State Office Building296-5375
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2:15 p.m.
 in Room 200*

Members: 20

Chair: Thissen-DFL

Vice Chair: Fritz-DFL

Republican Lead: Brod-R

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Abeler-R | Loeffler-DFL |
| Anderson, B.-R | Murphy, E.-DFL |
| Bunn-DFL | Norton-DFL |
| Emmer-R | Otremba-DFL |
| Finstad-R | Ruud-DFL |
| Gottwalt-R | Thao-DFL |
| Hamilton-R | Tschumper-DFL |
| Huntley-DFL | Walker-DFL |
| Liebling-DFL | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jennifer McNertney.....296-3244

Committee Legislative Assistant

Urszula Gryska296-5492

Mental Health Division

553 State Office Building296-7152
Meets: Fridays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 14

Chair: Walker-DFL

Vice Chair: Brynaert-DFL

Republican Lead: Anderson, B.-R

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Greiling-DFL | Otremba-DFL |
| Hosch-DFL | Paymar-DFL |
| Koenen-DFL | Ruud-DFL |
| Lanning-R | Tingelstad-R |
| Madore-DFL | Wardlow-R |
| McFarlane-R | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Jennifer McNertney.....296-3244

Committee Legislative Assistant

Rachel Gillespie296-9895

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs

379 State Office Building296-3709
Meets: Mondays at 4:00 p.m. and Wednesdays
 at 12:30 p.m. in the Basement Hearing
 Room*

Members: 15

Chair: Hilstrom-DFL

Vice Chair: Tschumper-DFL

Republican Lead: Lanning-R

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Beard-R | Koenen-DFL |
| Buesgens-R | Lenczewski-DFL |
| Dominguez-DFL | Marquart-DFL |
| Hausman-DFL | Olson-R |
| Holberg-R | Scalze-DFL |
| Howes-R | Solberg-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Peter Strohmeier296-5069

Committee Legislative Assistant

Erin Huppert296-2585

Public Safety and Civil Justice

367 State Office Building296-4262
Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.
 in Room 10*

Members: 19

Chair: Mullery-DFL

Vice Chair: Kalin-DFL

Republican Lead: Kohls-R

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Bigham-DFL | Lesch-DFL |
| Cornish-R | Lillie-DFL |
| DeLaForest-R | Olin-DFL |
| Emmer-R | Paymar-DFL |
| Hilstrom-DFL | Sailer-DFL |
| Holberg-R | Simon-DFL |
| Johnson-DFL | Smith-R |
| Kranz-DFL | Westrom-R |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Patrick Baldwin296-4283

Committee Legislative Assistant

Victoria Benson.....296-5526

Rules and Legislative Administration

459 State Office Building296-0172
Meets: At the call of the chair in (No Room
 Assigned)*

Members: 27

Chair: Sertich-DFL

Vice Chair: Loeffler-DFL

Republican Lead: Paulsen-R

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Buesgens-R | Murphy, E.-DFL |
| Carlson-DFL | Nelson-DFL |
| Dill-DFL | Ozment-R |
| Erhardt-R | Pelowski-DFL |
| Finstad-R | Peterson, A.-DFL |
| Hilstrom-DFL | Simon-DFL |
| Hortman-DFL | Simpson-R |
| Howes-R | Solberg-DFL |
| Juhnke-DFL | Thissen-DFL |
| Lillie-DFL | Tingelstad-R |
| Magnus-R | Westrom-R |
| Mahoney-DFL | Winkler-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Lisa Radzak.....296-2909

Committee Legislative Assistant

Tom Dicklich296-9183

Taxes

509 State Office Building296-4218
Meets: Mondays at 2:15 p.m. and Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 10*

Members: 26

Chair: Lenczewski-DFL

Vice Chair: Wollschlager-DFL

Republican Lead: Simpson-R

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Atkins-DFL | Lanning-R |
| Brod-R | Lesch-DFL |
| Carlson-DFL | Liebling-DFL |
| Davnie-DFL | Marquart-DFL |
| DeLaForest-R | Mullery-DFL |
| Demmer-R | Paulsen-R |
| Dill-DFL | Rukavina-DFL |
| Erhardt-R | Solberg-DFL |
| Hilstrom-DFL | Thao-DFL |
| Jaros-DFL | Tillberry-DFL |
| Koenen-DFL | Zellers-R |
| Kohls-R | |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Sarah Carlson-Wallrath296-8826

Committee Legislative Assistant

Jamie Becker-Finn.....296-2955

Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division

597 State Office Building296-6829
Meets: Fridays at 8:00 a.m. in Room 10*

Members: 11

Chair: Marquart-DFL

Vice Chair: Brown-DFL

Republican Lead: Erhardt-R

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Anderson, S.-R | Lenczewski-DFL |
| Demmer-R | Loeffler-DFL |
| Dittrich-DFL | Mullery-DFL |
| Lanning-R | Paymar-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Sarah Carlson-Wallrath296-8826

Committee Legislative Assistant

Paul Cumings296-5380

Ways and Means

443 State Office Building296-2365
Meets: Mondays at 10:00 a.m. in Room 200*

Members: 29

Chair: Solberg-DFL

Vice Chair: Swails-DFL

Republican Lead: Holberg-R

| | |
|--------------|----------------|
| Abeler-R | Kelliher-DFL |
| Brynaert-DFL | Lenczewski-DFL |
| Carlson-DFL | Mariani-DFL |
| Clark-DFL | McNamara-R |
| Dean-R | Murphy, E.-DFL |
| Eken-DFL | Murphy, M.-DFL |
| Erhardt-R | Ozment-R |
| Greiling-DFL | Paulsen-R |
| Gunther-R | Pelowski-DFL |
| Hilstrom-DFL | Sertich-DFL |
| Hilty-DFL | Smith-R |
| Huntley-DFL | Swiggum-R |
| Kahn-DFL | Tschumper-DFL |

Staff

Committee Administrator

Christine Murphy296-5491

Committee Legislative Assistant

Gerrie Boice.....296-5388

Minnesota House and Senate

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| 1 A Rep. Dave Olin-(DFL) B Rep. Bernie Lieder-(DFL) Sen. LeRoy A. Stumpf-(DFL) | 15 A Rep. Steve Gottwalt-(R) B Rep. Larry Haws-(DFL) Sen. Tarryl Clark-(DFL) | 29 A Rep. Randy Demmer-(R) B Rep. Kim Norton-(DFL) Sen. David H. Senjem-(R) | 43 A Rep. Sarah Anderson-(R) B Rep. John Benson-(DFL) Sen. Terri E. Bonoff-(DFL) | 57 A Rep. Karla Bigham -(DFL) B Rep. Denny McNamara-(R) Sen. Katie Sieben-(DFL) |
| 2 A Rep. Kent Eken-(DFL) B Rep. Brita Sailer-(DFL) Sen. Rod Skoe-(DFL) | 16 A Rep. Sondra Erickson-(R) B Rep. Mark Olson-(R) Sen. Betsy L. Wergin-(R) | 30 A Rep. Tina Liebling-(DFL) B Rep. Andy Welti-(DFL) Sen. Ann Lynch-(DFL) | 44 A Rep. Steve Simon-(DFL) B Rep. Ryan Winkler-(DFL) Sen. Ron Latz-(DFL) | 58 A Rep. Joe Mullery-(DFL) B Rep. Augustine Willie Dominguez-(DFL) Sen. Linda Higgins-(DFL) |
| 3 A Rep. Tom Anzelc-(DFL) B Rep. Loren A. Solberg-(DFL) Sen. Tom Saxhaug-(DFL) | 17 A Rep. Rob Eastlund-(R) B Rep. Jeremy Kalin-(DFL) Sen. Rick E. Olseen-(DFL) | 31 A Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.-(DFL) B Rep. Ken Tschumper-(DFL) Sen. Sharon L. Erickson Ropes-(DFL) | 45 A Rep. Sandra Peterson-(DFL) B Rep. Lyndon Carlson-(DFL) Sen. Ann H. Rest-(DFL) | 59 A Rep. Diane Loeffler-(DFL) B Rep. Phyllis Kahn-(DFL) Sen. Lawrence J. Pogemiller-(DFL) |
| 4 A Rep. Frank Moe-(DFL) B Rep. Larry Howes-(R) Sen. Mary A. Olson-(DFL) | 18 A Rep. Ron Shimanski-(R) B Rep. Dean Urdahl-(R) Sen. Steve Dille-(R) | 32 A Rep. Joyce Peppin-(R) B Rep. Kurt Zellers-(R) Sen. Warren Limmer-(R) | 46 A Rep. Michael Nelson-(DFL) B Rep. Debra Hilstrom-(DFL) Sen. Linda Scheid-(DFL) | 60 A Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher-(DFL) B Rep. Frank Hornstein-(DFL) Sen. D. Scott Dibble-(DFL) |
| 5 A Rep. Tom Rukavina-(DFL) B Rep. Anthony "Tony" Sertich-(DFL) Sen. David J. Tomassoni-(DFL) | 19 A Rep. Bruce Anderson-(R) B Rep. Tom Emmer-(R) Sen. Amy T. Koch-(R) | 33 A Rep. Steve Smith-(R) B Rep. John Berns-(R) Sen. Gen Olson-(R) | 47 A Rep. Denise Dittrich-(DFL) B Rep. Melissa Hortman-(DFL) Sen. Leo T. Foley-(DFL) | 61 A Rep. Karen Clark-(DFL) B Rep. Neva Walker-(DFL) Sen. Linda Berglin-(DFL) |
| 6 A Rep. David Dill-(DFL) B Rep. Mary Murphy-(DFL) Sen. Thomas M. Bakke-(DFL) | 20 A Rep. Aaron Peterson-(DFL) B Rep. Lyle Koenen-(DFL) Sen. Gary W. Kubly-(DFL) | 34 A Rep. Paul Kohls-(R) B Rep. Joe Hoppe-(R) Sen. Julianne E. Ortman-(R) | 48 A Rep. Tom Hackbarth-(R) B Rep. Jim Abeler-(R) Sen. Michael J. Jungbauer-(R) | 62 A Rep. Jim Davnie-(DFL) B Rep. Jean Wagenius-(DFL) Sen. Patricia Torres Ray-(DFL) |
| 7 A Rep. Thomas Huntley-(DFL) B Rep. Mike Karst-(DFL) Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon-(DFL) | 21 A Rep. Marty Seifert-(R) B Rep. Brad Finstad-(R) Sen. Dennis R. Frederickson-(R) | 35 A Rep. Michael Beard-(R) B Rep. Mark Buesgens-(R) Sen. Claire A. Robling-(R) | 49 A Rep. Chris DeLaForest-(R) B Rep. Kathy Tingelstad-(R) Sen. Debbie J. Johnson-(R) | 63 A Rep. Paul Thissen-(DFL) B Rep. Dan Larson-(DFL) |
| 8 A Rep. Bill Hilty-(DFL) B Rep. Tim Faust-(DFL) Sen. Tony Lourey-(DFL) | 22 A Rep. Doug Magnus-(R) B Rep. Rod Hamilton-(R) Sen. Jim Vickerman-(DFL) | 36 A Rep. Mary Liz Holberg-(R) B Rep. Pat Garofalo-(R) Sen. Pat Parisseau-(R) | 50 A Rep. Carolyn Laine-(DFL) B Rep. Kate Knuth-(DFL) Sen. Satveer S. Chaudhary-(DFL) | 64 A Rep. Erin Murphy-(DFL) B Rep. Michael Paymar-(DFL) Sen. Richard J. Cohen-(DFL) |
| 9 A Rep. Morrie Lanning-(R) B Rep. Paul Marquart-(DFL) Sen. Keith Langseth-(DFL) | 23 A Rep. Terry Morrow-(DFL) B Rep. Kathy Brynaert-(DFL) Sen. Kathy Sheran-(DFL) | 37 A Rep. Shelley Madore-(DFL) B Rep. Dennis Ozment-(R) Sen. Chris Gerlach-(R) | 51 A Rep. Scott Kranz-(DFL) B Rep. Tom Tillberry-(DFL) Sen. Don Betzold-(DFL) | 65 A Rep. Cy Thao-(DFL) B Rep. Carlos Mariani-(DFL) Sen. Sandra L. Pappas-(DFL) |
| 10 A Rep. Bud Nornes-(R) B Rep. Dean Simpson-(R) Sen. Dan Skogen-(DFL) | 24 A Rep. Bob Gunther-(R) B Rep. Tony Cornish-(R) Sen. Julie A. Rosen-(R) | 38 A Rep. Sandra Masin-(DFL) B Rep. Lynn Wardlow-(R) Sen. Jim Carlson-(DFL) | 52 A Rep. Bob Dettmer-(R) B Rep. Matt Dean-(R) Sen. Ray Vandever-(R) | 66 A Rep. John Lesch-(DFL) B Rep. Linda Slocum-(DFL) Sen. Ellen R. Anderson-(DFL) |
| 11 A Rep. Torrey Westrom-(R) B Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba-(DFL) Sen. Bill G. Ingebrigtsen-(R) | 25 A Rep. Laura Brod-(R) B Rep. David Bly-(DFL) Sen. Thomas M. Neuville-(R) | 39 A Rep. Rick Hansen-(DFL) B Rep. Joseph Atkins-(DFL) Sen. James P. Metzzen-(DFL) | 53 A Rep. Paul Gardner-(DFL) B Rep. Carol McFarlane-(R) Sen. Sandy Rummel-(DFL) | 67 A Rep. Tim Mahoney-(DFL) B Rep. Sheldon Johnson-(DFL) Sen. Mee Moua-(DFL) |
| 12 A Rep. John Ward-(DFL) B Rep. Al Doty-(DFL) Sen. Paul E. Koering-(R) | 26 A Rep. Connie Ruth-(R) B Rep. Patti Fritz-(DFL) Sen. Dick Day-(R) | 40 A Rep. Will Morgan-(DFL) B Rep. Ann Lenczewski-(DFL) Sen. John Doll-(DFL) | 54 A Rep. Mindy Greiling-(DFL) B Rep. Bev Scalze-(DFL) Sen. John Marty-(DFL) | |
| 13 A Rep. Bud Heidgerken-(R) B Rep. Al Juhnke-(DFL) Sen. Joe Gimse-(R) | 27 A Rep. Robin Brown-(DFL) B Rep. Jeanne Poppe-(DFL) Sen. Dan Sparks-(DFL) | 41 A Rep. Ron Erhardt-(R) B Rep. Neil W. Peterson-(R) Sen. Geoff Michel-(R) | 55 A Rep. Leon Lillie-(DFL) B Rep. Nora Slawik-(DFL) Sen. Charles W. Wiger-(DFL) | |
| 14 A Rep. Daniel Severson-(R) B Rep. Larry Hosch-(DFL) Sen. Michelle L. Fischbach-(R) | 28 A Rep. Sandy Wollschlager-(DFL) B Rep. Steve Swiggum-(R) Sen. Steve Murphy-(DFL) | 42 A Rep. Maria Ruud-(DFL) B Rep. Erik Paulsen-(R) Sen. David W. Hann-(R) | 56 A Rep. Julie Bunn-(DFL) B Rep. Marsha Swails-(DFL) Sen. Kathy L. Saltzman-(DFL) | |

Minnesota House Committee Schedule 2007-2008

Updated 1/10/07

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| 8:00-9:30 | | Envir. & Nat. Res. Fin. (5) Public Safety Finance (10) Gov. Ops./Ref. Tech. (200) E-12 Education (B) | Public Safety Finance (10) Gov. Ops./Ref. Tech. (200) Ag./Rur. Eco. & Vet Aff.(B) | Envir. & Nat. Res. Fin. (5) Public Safety Finance (10) Gov. Ops./Ref. Tech. (200) E-12 Education (B) | Telecom Reg./Infrastruc.(5) Prop. Tax/Local Sales (10) Veterans Affairs Div. (200) |
| 9:30-10:00 | | Break | Break | Caucus | Break |
| 10:00-11:30 | Ways & M. / Finance (200)* | Hous. & Pub. Hlth. Fin. (5) Taxes (10) Bio. & Emerg. Tech. (200) Ag./Rur.Eco.&Vet Af. F.(B) | Hous. & Pub. Hlth. Fin. (5) Taxes (10) Bio. & Emerg. Tech. (200) Ag./Rur.Eco.&Vet Af. F.(B) | SESSION | Labor & Consumer Prot. (5) Mental Health Div. (200) |
| 11:30-12:30 | Lunch/Caucus | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch | |
| 12:30-2:00 | SESSION | High. Ed./Wrkforce P&F(5) Public Safe./Civil Just. (10) Hlth. Care/H. Srv. Fin.(200) Local Govt. Metro Aff. (B) | High. Ed./Wrkforce P&F(5) Hlth. Care/H. Srv. Fin.(200) Local Govt. Metro Aff. (B) | High. Ed./Wrkforce P&F(5) Public Safe./Civil Just. (10) Hlth. Care/H. Srv. Fin.(200) | |
| 2:15-3:45 | Taxes (10) Energy Fin. & Policy (200) Ag./Rur. Eco. & Vet Aff.(B) | State Government Fin. (5) K-12 Education Fin. (10) Hlth. & Human Serv. (200) Capital Investment Fin. (B) | K-12 Education Fin. (10) Energy Fin. & Policy (200) | State Government Fin. (5) K-12 Education Fin. (10) Hlth. & Human Serv. (200) Capital Investment Fin. (B) | |
| 4:00-5:30 | Ed. Fin. Econ. Comp. F. (5) Game, Fish, & Forestry (10) MN Heritage Finance (200) Local Govt. Metro Aff. (B) | Environ. & Natural Res. (5) Transportation Fin. (10) Early Child. Lrn. Fin. (200) Commerce and Labor (B) | Caucus | Environ. & Natural Res. (5) Transportation Fin. (10) Early Child. Lrn. Fin. (200) Commerce and Labor (B) | |

*Ways and Means, Finance, Rules and Legislative Administration, and Ethics meet at the call of the Chair
Room numbers in parenthesis -all located in State Office Building.

Fulfilling a goal

Anzelc returns to St. Paul in a different role

By MIA SIMPSON

Three hundred miles span the two farthest corners of Rep. Tom Anzelc's (DFL-Balsam Township) district, which brushes, at its top, Canada, and at its bottom, the southernmost border of Itasca County.



Rep. Tom Anzelc

pursuits.

"It's just about run down," he said.

"You don't represent a district like the one I do without having a good work ethic and without having energy."

Anzelc, pronounced AN-zels, knows the landscape of Capitol politics as deeply as his home territory. He worked in Gov. Rudy Perpich's administration as assistant

commissioner in the Department of Human Services, and later as executive director of the Gambling Control Board. He also sat on a committee asked to design a state-run welfare assistance program, which later became the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Anzelc credits Perpich, Perpich's two brothers and another set of iconic politicians — the Kennedy brothers — for his own calling to public service.

"The Kennedys literally mesmerized me," he said. "They came from wealth, but they lifted people up."

"Contrary to the Kennedys, the Perpichs didn't come from wealth ... but there was a similarity: caring for other people and helping other people. They also became dentists, an accomplishment in itself. I marveled at that."

Anzelc's roots matched those of the Perpichs': a son of a miner on Minnesota's Iron Range. His political agenda — strong education, accessible health care, jobs and property taxes

DISTRICT 3A

2002 population: 36,745

Largest city: International Falls

Counties: Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods

Top concerns: Education, health care and property taxes.

— strongly reflects his childhood experience in a working-class family.

"My father was really a farmer/labor rights member ... he believed that the working class should run the country or, at least, that the working class needed to have political representation."

Anzelc served as a county commissioner from 1980 to 1982 before being asked by Perpich to resign and join his administration. Prior to that, he was a civics teacher in Hibbing, and a cross-country and basketball coach. He also worked as a labor union official for 12 years.

"Now, I'm starting another one of life's adventures," he said. "This is something I've wanted to do more than anything else, since high school, a long time ago."

Youthful enthusiasm

For Bigham, value of public service instilled at an early age

By PATTY OSTBERG

Glancing over the resume of Rep. Karla Bigham (DFL-Cottage Grove), one might not suspect she is only 27 years old.



Rep. Karla Bigham

She served the last two years on the Cottage Grove City Council; previously, she was a union organizer for Service Employees International Union and also worked as a DFL caucus researcher and assistant. For the past three years, she worked as a paralegal for the Property Crimes Division of the Hennepin County Attorney's Office.

Bigham said being a public servant is the highest calling a person can achieve.

"Knowing I have vested interest in the future" of Minnesota and the country helped motivate her political pursuits, she said.

Her parents instilled these social values starting at a young age. She remembers the family sitting in front of the television watching the president's State of the Union Address to "hear what our president was doing."

She ran for the House after seeing the effects of increased property taxes and decreased local government aid in Cottage Grove. Bigham said she felt the need to bring her city-level experience to the state level.

The issues she "campaigns on and will work tirelessly on" include education, transportation and health care, she said. A key transportation initiative that Bigham will try to secure more funding for is the Red Rock Corridor transitway, a proposed commuter rail line that would run from Hastings to St. Paul on existing rail lines.

Bigham has a passion for all her committee assignments: the Game, Fish and Forestry Division of the House Environment and

DISTRICT 57A

2002 population: 36,710

Largest city: Cottage Grove

Counties: Washington, Dakota

Top concerns: Property tax relief and stable, consistent funding for schools.

Natural Resources Committee, the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, two public safety and state government finance divisions of the House Finance Committee, and the Veterans Affairs Division of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

In Cottage Grove, Bigham said she "was a fierce advocate for the public safety department." For example, she worked with other councilors and organizations to restore the city's K-9 unit after several years of absence.

"I was born and raised to really pay attention to what goes on in society ... to know what to do to make things better," she said. "I look forward to a productive session."

Third time's a charm

Remembering a lesson led to House seat

By CRAIG GREEN

When Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield) began his first run for the House in 2002, he believed that he needed to educate people about



Rep. David Bly

values and compassion for others. He lost by 46 votes. When he lost his second run in 2004 by 586 votes, a friend told Bly that what was important was that the voters knew he valued their concerns and needs.

Bly, an educator, never forgot the lesson. On his third try, he won.

Born and raised in Northfield, Bly said that he was inspired to enter politics "by people like [former U.S. Senator] Paul Wellstone, who said you should act on your convictions, rather than be an observer, but a participant."

"We're all in this together, and when we all prosper, we all prosper," Bly said. "I really think that we're a better country when we take care of each other and we provide for each other."

His tenure as a representative follows years of working with district residents: as a teacher at the Northfield Alternative Learning Center and Faribault Public Schools; an actor and director at the Northfield Arts Guild; part of a negotiating team for Northfield teachers; and a board member on several civic and youth organizations.

One of Bly's first priorities in the House is to work on public education funding reform. Bly thinks that funding needs "to be fair across the state, and not so dependent on property taxes." Among his committee assignments is vice chair of the Early Childhood Learning Finance Division of the House Finance Committee.

DISTRICT 25B

2002 population: 36,590
Largest city: Northfield
Counties: Rice, Scott
Top concerns: Education funding, health care, renewable energy

A strong proponent of access to affordable health care, Bly would also like to work on renewable energy standards and the development of local energy resources. There are currently two wind turbines in Northfield, one at Carleton College and one at St. Olaf College.

Another concern in Bly's district is the expansion of Highway 169 through Belle Plaine and how it will affect commercial growth in the area.

Sitting in his office in the State Office Building, Bly said, "I'm motivated by a desire to serve the people in my community and in my district. It's what brings people to [the House]. To make Minnesota a better place."

Reporting for duty

McFarlane is first female House member from her district

By MIA SIMPSON

Destiny implies a special power, even a certain magic, that brings a person to a particular place in space and time where he or she is meant to be.



Rep. Carol McFarlane

Rep. Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake) may have been destined for her House seat.

"It's like my husband says, 'Carol, you've been preparing for this your whole life, and you didn't even realize it,'" she said. "All the opportunities I've had, all my experiences, have prepared me for this."

A mother of three and grandmother of three, McFarlane spent the past seven years on the White Bear Lake school board, where she said she earned a reputation as a collaborator,

listener and consensus builder. Early on, she was assigned the position of legislative liaison, which made her responsible for, among other things, connecting local constituents to their state legislators.

"I embraced it," she said. "I was bringing parents down [to the State Capitol] and providing tours. I think this is the people's place, and that everybody's opinion matters here."

She decided to run for office after being approached by former Rep. Doug Meslow, who retired from the seat last year. She is now the first female House member elected from her district and the only Republican representative in Ramsey County.

McFarlane, who owns a local tire company with her husband of 35 years, Patrick, said her 25 years of experience as a community leader and volunteer offer her broad access

DISTRICT 53B

2002 Population: 36,699
Largest city: White Bear Lake
County: Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, small business, fiscal responsibility

to issues and an important, sometimes rare, perspective in politics.

"[Issues] don't exist in silos," she said. "They are interconnected."

Her plan is to "learn, listen and conserve" as she navigates the corridors of the Capitol. McFarlane said she'll focus her energy on supporting small business and education, promoting sound fiscal management and introducing issues raised by a group of local citizens she plans to convene and meet with in her district.

"I believe in people, and I believe in fairness, and that's why I want to represent the people," she said. "Life has led me this. How lucky am I that I get to do this at this point in my life?"

A community leader

Norton plans to stick to what constituents asked her to do

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

The PTA, the school board, a degree in education and years of volunteering give Rep. Kim Norton (DFL-Rochester) a wealth of experience to share.



Rep. Kim Norton

Norton plans to stick to the basics in her freshman year at the House of Representatives: lowering property taxes, lowering tuition and getting health care costs under control. "For me it's doing what my constituents asked me to — getting along with both sides, to be a moderate and thinking of my district when I make my decisions," she said.

She spent the past eight years on the Rochester School Board, including one year

as chair. There she saw firsthand the effects of funding reductions to early childhood and K-12 education. As a mother of four children ages 16-24, she is also well aware of the effects of increased tuition costs at colleges and universities across the state.

Homelessness is a problem Norton is trying to fight, as well. "The goal is finding a way for people to help themselves, it's a hand up, not hand out," Norton said.

Last April, Norton and others went looking for homeless in Rochester at 3 a.m. and found them in parks and ditches. "I nearly walked on one man who had come off the train. He has been homeless for 20 years. He didn't see it as a problem. It was a way of life for him." Norton wants to see cheap temporary housing for people that are passing through town. "The rest of the citizens don't want to see people

DISTRICT 29B

2002 population: 36,815
Largest city: Rochester
County: Olmsted
Top concerns: Education and property taxes

sleeping in the parks."

Norton is vice chair of the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee. She also serves on the House Health and Human Services Committee and the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee.

"I think it's important for Rochester and the University of Minnesota with its bio-diesel research. I see it's important for the state in the long run. We need to look at new technology coming in, how we can do things different and smarter. It is a visionary committee, it will affect the state 20-30 years in the future."

A change in venue

Shimanski trades in fields for House floor

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Rep. Ron Shimanski (R-Silver Lake) is trading in his 66 acres of land and 25 head of beef cattle in McLeod County for a desk in the House Chamber.



Rep. Ron Shimanski

Yet he is staying close to his roots.

One of the three farmers in the House, Shimanski sits on the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee and the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division of the House Finance Committee.

Shimanski is excited to serve on these two committees because he "wants to keep agriculture as a driving economic force in Minnesota, and assist the agricultural

industry through legislation that helps it move forward to the 21st century." Shimanski also believes it is important to keep "agriculture as a vibrant industry through research available at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture."

In his committee work, Shimanski wants to make sure the needs of all veterans are being taken care of, be they from the current conflict in Iraq or for those that fought more than 60 years ago in World War II.

But, Shimanski said, education funding and transportation are the two key issues in his west central Minnesota district.

With declining or steady school district enrollments, the amount of money from the state has decreased or remained stagnant while operating costs continue to increase. Several operating levies have been voted down, he said. "The taxpayers are saying that

they don't want to spend any more; they don't want to be taxed any more," Shimanski said.

Improving and maintaining transportation infrastructure is another issue facing Shimanski's district, where he feels that the state highways have not been kept up to date. "There are ongoing projects and things in the schedule, and we want to make sure that we maintain good processes of improving our highways," Shimanski said.

Shimanski, who works as a layout and design technician, also serves on the Labor and Consumer Protection and the Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure divisions of the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

DISTRICT 18A

2002 population: 36,487
Largest city: Hutchinson
Counties: McLeod, Meeker
Top concerns: Education funding and transportation

Starting young

YMCA Youth in Government takes over the Capitol

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Should gambling be legalized in Minnesota? Burnsville High School senior Richard Juskowiak thinks so, and he introduced a bill that would do just that.

"It could help with the budget problems or help lower taxes," Juskowiak said.

His bill has no chance of becoming law because it was introduced during a Model Assembly for youth held Jan. 4-7 at the State Capitol. But he and more than 1,300 eighth through 12th graders from across the state received hands-on experience on how a bill becomes law.

Every year the Minnesota YMCA Youth in Government program brings students to the Capitol for a four-day legislative workout. The hope is that they will leave with a clearer idea of how state government works and legislation is made.

Juskowiak is in his first year of participation. "Several of my friends did it last year and told me how fun it was, so this year I'm giving it

a try." That's not unusual. Many students become interested in the program from friends who had participated in years past.

Take Shannon Calhoun, 16, from Red Wing, for instance. "They [my friends] told me how much fun it was, and this year I found time in my schedule to do it."

According to its Web site, "Youth in Government is a nationwide YMCA program, active in nearly 40 states. Nationwide, nearly 25,000 students attend state Youth in Government conferences each year, with 3,300 adult volunteers and YMCA staff serving as adult advisors."

Youth in Government programs strive to promote and develop an understanding of local, state and national concerns and political systems and provide a forum for the effective and peaceful resolution of issues and concerns.

The program also develops the responsibilities and leadership roles essential to the health of a participatory democracy.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Seventeen-year-old Calvin Wessels waits to be called on by the speaker during the Minnesota YMCA Youth in Government 2007 Model Assembly Session. Wessels is a senior at Mounds View High School and lives in Shoreview. He is a representative for the Kellogg House.

In Minnesota, the program began with a mock governor and House and Senate in 1946. Today, Youth in Government students are able to learn about just about every aspect of state government — from legislators to lobbyists to members of the judicial system, the students participate and run the mock proceedings.

Students typically sign up for what positions they want and are placed in various roles by program leaders.

The work begins long before students arrive at the Capitol complex.

Students usually spend 60-90 minutes each week with an advisor at school who helps them research and draft their bills.

Each student presents his or her bill before the appropriate committee. If a bill receives committee approval, it is sent to the House floor to be voted on by the full House.

This year, bills that were introduced included one that would permit students to have a grade-point average higher than 4.0 if they take honors and advanced placement classes. However, the bill did not receive committee approval.

Another bill proposed that if a student under age 19 reads a book they will be paid 5 cents per page. Committee debate was lively, and after the bill's sponsor explained how the loopholes would be closed, the bill was approved and sent to the House floor. The committee approved the bill just to see how it would be received and debated in session.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Gary Nelson, 16, from White Bear Lake Area High School, and a member of the Wabasha Senate, confers with Christopher Dorman on a bill Jan. 5 during the Minnesota YMCA Youth in Government 2007 Model Assembly Session. Dorman, 17, is a junior from Albert Lea High School and is the Kellogg House Floor leader.

Monday, Jan. 8

HF1-Thissen (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Children's health security account and program created, eligibility criteria and covered services specified, Legislative Task Force on Children's Health Care Coverage established and money appropriated.

HF2-Swails (DFL)

Finance

Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding authorized.

HF3-Marquart (DFL)

Taxes

School district levies modified, market value property tax credit computation modified, property tax refunds increased for homeowners and renters, senior deferral eligibility increased, city and county aid increased and money appropriated.

HF4-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Energy Finance & Policy Division

Renewable energy standard established.

HF5-Bly (DFL)

Finance

Early childhood family education, school readiness, and Head Start program funding increased, and money appropriated.

HF6-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

General education basic formula allowance increased by 3 percent per year.

HF7-Loeffler (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Appropriations continued in effect unless a law is enacted eliminating or amending the appropriation.

HF8-Wollschlaeger (DFL)

Taxes

Federal tax conformity provided.

HF9-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Dairy investment income and corporate franchise tax credit provided for qualifying investments in dairy operations.

HF10-Thissen (DFL)

Taxes

Small business technology credit provided.

HF11-Rukavina (DFL)

Ways & Means

State expenditure forecasts required to include a projected inflation adjustment.

HF12-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Office of lieutenant governor abolished through proposed constitutional amendment.

HF13-Tingelstad (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Legislative training forums required and money appropriated.

HF14-Heidgerken (R)

Taxes

Military pension's federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF15-Hilstrom (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government eliminated.

HF16-Mullery (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Occupational safety and health law violators prohibited from receiving state contracts, written safety and health plans required for construction projects, and civil and criminal penalties provided.

HF17-Rukavina (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

House of Representatives included in the public employment labor relations act.

HF18-Lieder (DFL)

Finance

Motor vehicle sales tax proceeds allocated.

HF19-Gunther (R)

Finance

Historical society previous appropriation balance canceled to the General Fund, funding provided for the preservation of the Wells Depot and the Winnebago Museum and money appropriated.

HF20-Thissen (DFL)

Finance

Pre-kindergarten scholarship granting organizations contribution income tax credit provided.

HF21-Lesch (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Clinical trial registration provided and civil penalties imposed.

HF22-Jaros (DFL)

Finance

Walter F. Mondale Drive designated.

HF23-Erhardt (R)

Finance

County wheelage tax authorized, vehicle registration tax provisions modified, transit fund and accounts established, motor vehicle sales tax revenues distributed, motor fuel tax rates modified, bonds authorized and money appropriated.

HF24-Dean (R)

Finance

Boomsite Wayside administration transferred to Natural Resources Department and designated as a historic wayside.

HF25-Anzelc (DFL)

Finance

Itasca County infrastructure funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF26-Thissen (DFL)

E-12 Education

Early learning opportunities unified administrative structure provided.

HF27-Hackbarth (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Game and fish habitat dedicated sales tax funding provided, game and fish preservation fund established, walk-in public access program created and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF28-Scalze (DFL)

Finance

Trunk Highway 36 Rice Street bridge funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF29-Severson (R)

Taxes

Military pension's federal income tax subtraction provided.

HF30-Severson (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Veteran-owned small businesses designated as targeted group businesses for purposes of awarding state and metropolitan agency procurement contracts.

HF31-Mullery (DFL)

Taxes

Public safety retiree pension's federal tax ruled conformity provided and pension funds authorized to withhold and pay insurance premiums.

HF32-Hackbarth (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Outdoor walk-in access program established to voluntarily make available privately held land for hunting and fishing.

HF33-Buesgens (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Personal watercraft operational requirements modified to require navigational lights during certain hours.

HF34-Kahn (DFL)

Biosciences & Emerging Technology

Stem cell research; state policy established authorizing the University of Minnesota to spend state-appropriated funds on stem cell research, criminal penalties imposed and money appropriated.

HF35-Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Multi-member Senate districts provided that coincide with congressional district boundaries and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF36-Heidgerken (R)**Finance**

School district integration revenue modified.

HF37-Brod (R)**Taxes**

Out-of-state active military duty tax deduction clarified to include active duty performed by members of the National Guard and other military reservists.

HF38-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Conveyances of homestead by spouses provisions modified.

HF39-Mullery (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Fair Share Health Care Act adopted, fair share health care fund established, employer payments required and criminal penalties imposed.

HF40-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Employer post-secondary education expense tax credit provided.

HF41-Jaros (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Cell phone and mobile phone use prohibited while operating a motor vehicle.

HF42-Rukavina (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Appropriations continued to fund state agencies if bills are not passed to continue funding.

HF43-Buesgens (R)**Finance**

Undergraduate tuition guarantee provided to Minnesota resident students.

HF44-Urdahl (R)**Taxes**

Rural Minnesota Catch-Up Credit provided allowing a credit against the income tax of an employer for the creation and retention of certain jobs.

HF45-Tillberry (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk highway improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF46-Thao (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Translation services state contracts preference given to native speakers.

HF47-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Learn-to-earn summer youth employment program funding provided and money appropriated.

HF48-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Consumer credit scores and history use prohibited in underwriting automobile insurance policies.

HF49-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Criminal gang behavior defined as a public nuisance and injunctive relief and other remedies authorized.

HF50-Thissen (DFL)**Taxes**

First tier commercial-industrial property exempted from the state general tax.

HF51-Mullery (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Transportation; Technical Review Committee membership requirements modified.

HF52-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Dairy operations income and corporate franchise tax provided for qualifying investments in dairy operations.

HF53-Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Discrimination in auto insurance prohibited based on geographical area.

HF54-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

City aid base additions provided for certain cities, city aid appropriation limit increased and aid required to be used for certain purposes.

HF55-Svigum (R)**Finance**

Nursing facility payment rates increased to the geographic group III median rate.

HF56-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul Police Department; Special Investigation Unit Asian Gang Task Force funding provided and money appropriated.

HF57-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Board of Medical Practices advisory council expiration dates extended.

HF58-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Increased job training and wages for minorities initiative and report required.

HF59-Hackbarth (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Northshore Trail portion designated for all-terrain vehicle use, and registry of off-highway vehicle trails required.

HF60-Brod (R)**Taxes**

Income tax rates reduced.

HF61-Svigum (R)**Taxes**

Property tax rebate provided and money appropriated.

HF62-Brod (R)**Taxes**

Income tax rates reduced.

HF63-Lesch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Human services background studies permanent bar to set aside a disqualification repealed.

HF64-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Dairy and livestock investment income and corporate franchise credit provided for qualifying investments.

HF65-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Notary public maximum fees increased.

HF66-Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Appropriations enacted in major finance or revenue bills continued in effect until eliminated or modified.

HF67-Thissen (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Lottery games provided to support local parks.

Thursday, Jan. 11

HF68-Solberg (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Emergency state government appropriation provided, state budget reports and recommendations required, inflation impact disclosure required, continuing appropriations provided for the operation of state government and money appropriated.

HF69-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Health insurance premiums federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF70-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 463, Eden Valley-Watkins, environmental hazard remediation funding provided and money appropriated.

HF71-Hosch (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Farming definition modified relating to the Minnesota Agricultural Development Act.

HF72-Hosch (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Bear baiting restrictions modified.

HF73-Paulsen (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislative sessions provided in odd-numbered years only.

HF74-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Great Lakes; President and Congress memorialized, by resolution, to protect the Great Lakes from aquatic invasive species.

HF75-Pelowski (DFL)**Governmental Operations,
Reform, Technology & Elections**

Charitable contributions from campaign committees limit provisions modified.

HF76-Shimanski (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Crow River; South Fork canoe route designated.

HF77-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Construction contracts best value criteria established.

HF78-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding authorized.

HF79-Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations,
Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teachers Retirement Association administrative provisions modified.

HF80-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Barbers and barbering schools regulation modified.

HF81-Paulsen (R)**Taxes**

Long-term capital gains income tax exclusion provided.

HF82-Erickson (R)**Taxes**

Military pension federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF83-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

Legislative auditor authorized to retain certain audit fees.

HF84-Erickson (R)**Health & Human Services**

Ombudsman for mental health term of office specified.

HF85-Bunn (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006 to the federal teacher expense deduction, tuition subtraction, and other provisions of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act, Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunity Act and Pension Protection Plan.

HF86-Hackbarth (R)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Elk River designated as the state energy city.

HF87-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul; Asian Pacific Cultural Center pre-design expenditures authorized from previous appropriation.

HF88-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Minnesota Family Investment Program subsidized housing penalty repealed.

HF89-Greiling (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Special education; President and Congress memorialized, by resolution, to carry through on their pledge to fund 40 percent of special education costs.

HF90-Greiling (DFL)**E-12 Education**

No Child Left Behind Act; Congress memorialized by resolution not to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act in its current form.

HF91-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Minimum wage increased and annual inflation adjustment mechanism provided.

HF92-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Hunting licensees reviewed to determine if individuals are ineligible to possess a firearm, and if so, law enforcement officials notified.

HF93-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Parole and probation authority access to records granted relating to carrying of weapons without a permit.

HF94-Bigham (DFL)**Governmental Operations,
Reform, Technology & Elections**

Major finance and revenue bill appropriations continued in effect until eliminated or modified.

HF95-Bigham (DFL)**Governmental Operations,
Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislative per diem payments prohibited during a special session called because the Legislature failed to enact a state government budget.

HF96-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Property tax refunds paid to estates in certain circumstances.

HF97-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Research tax credit extended to the individual income tax, portion of the credit refunded and money appropriated.

HF98-Anderson, S. (R)**Finance**

School district equity revenue increased for districts above the 95th percentile.

HF99-Erickson (R)**Taxes**

Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006 to the federal teacher expense deduction, tuition subtraction, and other provisions of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act, Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunity Act and Pension Protection Plan.

HF100-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Farm enhancement loan program established and money appropriated.

HF101-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Agricultural land excluded from the tax base for school bonded debt levies.

HF102-Shimanski (R)**Finance**

Winsted authorized to issue bonds for acquisition of a city hall, community center and police station.

HF103-Berns (R)**Taxes**

Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006 to the federal teacher expense deduction, tuition subtraction, and other provisions of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act, Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunity Act and Pension Protection Plan.

HF104-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Animals killed by order of the Board of Animal Health reimbursement limits removed.

HF105-Hortman (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Passenger restraint required for children under age 8 in motor vehicles.

HF106-Thissen (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Seat belt violation; primary offense provided in all seating positions regardless of age, and seat belt violation fine increased.

HF107-Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Wagering losses treatment modified under the alternative minimum tax.

HF108-Morrow (DFL)**Taxes**

North Mankato local sales tax authorized and funds use specified.

HF109-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

Blooming Prairie street and sewer improvements provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

Where to find information**House Public Information Services**

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

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

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the House's Web page. To connect, point your web browser at: www.house.mn

Committees continued from page 9

we recommended. We got probably 95 percent of what we recommended to her,” he said.

Something new are the 14 divisions under the House Finance Committee. This committee will work somewhat in tandem with the House Ways and Means Committee, sharing the same committee time and meeting location.

“Ways and Means will deal with the issues like the forecast, and we’ll deal with the budget per se, but they will set the targets,” said Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Crystal), finance committee chairman.

Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) hopes the way divisions will report to full committees does not mean a reduction in open government.

“The bills, I presume, would be introduced and sent to the regular division that they would go to. If not, then this becomes a much more common opportunity where they could blink back and forth (between the committee and a division) internally without the public being able to watch.”

Sertich said that openness is a priority to the House DFL. “We will strive to make sure that you’ll be able to find this information online, on TV, every which way all the information that is needed on the bills as they move forward.”



NOTES

A buck a ring

It will cost you if your cell phone rings during a meeting of the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division of the House Finance Committee. Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar), division chairman, placed a “Penalty Jar” near his gavel when members met for the first time on Jan. 10.

“If your phone goes off, it will cost you a buck,” he warned.

He said business is done over coffee in rural communities, so the drink will be available during the committee meetings. The money is expected to cover the cost of the coffee, and he encouraged anyone drinking coffee to contribute to the “kitty” even if it is not for a cell phone violation.

Illegal to be mean

One of the first bills to be introduced this session should have been one making it illegal to be mean, at least that’s what Rep. Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington) proposed.

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In his Jan. 8 e-newsletter, “The Inside Scoop,” Garofalo listed his thoughts on bills that were introduced in the House and Senate, including his fictitious “No More Mean People” bill. He placed this bill at the end of his newsletter and then added, “OK, this isn’t real. Just wanted to check and see if you were still reading.”

‘Fantasy Legislature’

Think politics is all about fun and games? So does Minnesota Public Radio.

In December, MPR launched Minnesota Fantasy Legislature — similar to fantasy

sports leagues — in which “managers” (you, the player) draft “teams” of state representatives and senators who then score points based on how far their real-life bills make it through the Legislative process.

Unfortunately, you can no longer sign up for the 2007 session. According to its Web site, MFL is currently just an experiment; if it’s successful, MFL will add more leagues next year and allow new people to sign up. For now, however, you can still follow the current legislator “power rankings” and watch the progress of the legislative session, play by play.

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota adoption

| | |
|--|----------|
| Estimated number of children adopted each year in Minnesota | 2,000 |
| Percent, as estimate, that are stepparent or relative adoptions..... | 33 |
| Children under state guardianship, as of Sept. 15, 2006..... | 1,625 |
| On Sept. 15, 2005..... | 1,473 |
| Of those under state guardianship in 2006, children who needed an adoptive home immediately | 636 |
| Number in pre-adoptive homes..... | 702 |
| Number in long-term foster care by court order | 243 |
| Number who are age 14 or older and have chosen not to be adopted | 44 |
| Of the 636 waiting to be adopted, percent that are siblings who need to be adopted together | 57 |
| Percent diagnosed with a psychological or medical disability | 50 |
| Percent chronically neglected or abused | 43 |
| Percent who are between ages 12-18 | 38 |
| Percent who are between ages 6-11 | 28 |
| Cost charged by public agencies to people adopting Minnesota's waiting children..... | 0 |
| Children under state guardianship who were adopted in 2005..... | 732 |
| In 2000 | 632 |
| In 1995 | 266 |
| Number of boys, girls who were adopted in 2005..... | 355, 377 |
| Of those adopted, average number of days child was under state guardianship | 556 |
| In 2000 | 718 |
| In 1995 | 809 |
| Percent of adopted population in 2005 under age 6 | 55 |
| In 1995 | 43 |
| Percent of adopted population in 2005 between ages 6-11 | 32 |
| In 1995 | 50 |
| Average number of children entering state guardianship between 2003 and 2005 because of court termination of parental rights..... | 724 |
| Eight-year average from 1995-2002 | 605 |
| Percent of children adopted from 2001-05 that were white | 56 |
| Percent who were black..... | 21 |
| Percent who were two or more races..... | 17 |

Sources: Adoption: Finding homes for Minnesota's waiting children, Department of Human Services, October 2006; Minnesota Adoption Resource Network.

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SESSION WEEKLY

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HF110- HF227

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Gov. Tim Pawlenty addresses a joint convention in the House Chamber during his fifth State of the State address on Jan. 17.

—Photo by: Sarah Stacke

Looking at a surplus

Legislature has some financial wiggle room this biennium

By SONJA HEGMAN

Unlike the last biennium, this time around the Legislature gets to decide what to do with an excess of cash.

In addition to assigning dollars to programs funded by the projected \$30-plus billion state budget for the next two fiscal years (running from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2009), legislators will decide what to do with a projected \$2.2 billion budget surplus. Broken down, it amounts to \$1.038 billion in the current fiscal year and \$1.132 billion in Fiscal Years 2008-09.

Four years ago, members entered the first year of the biennium with a projected \$4.5 billion deficit.

Surplus vs. sustainable spending

Legislators shouldn't be ready to spend the full amount, however. For the most part, the numbers don't factor in inflation.

In the state's November economic forecast, inflation numbers were provided using the consumer price index. Bill Marx, House chief fiscal analyst, told the House Finance Committee Jan. 8 that if those numbers are factored in for the next biennium, inflation would use up \$990 million of the \$2.2 billion.

"This is not very scientific," Marx said. "That's not the way the budget will be put together."

He added that some areas of the state budget will get inflationary increases; some areas will probably get greater than inflationary increases; and some areas may even be reduced. He said all of that needs to be factored in for more precise numbers.

Legislators have also been warned to be careful in committing the money to programs that would need sustained funding. Marx said there may not be enough funding in Fiscal Years 2010-11 to sustain these programs.

"If inflation was applied to everything, the \$1 billion in 08-09 could not all be permanent or ongoing spending. Some portion would have to be one-time money," Marx said.

He added that how the spending or revenue reductions are done in Fiscal Years 2008-09

will determine how much money will be sustained in Fiscal Years 2010-11.

"That's one for the Legislature to discuss," he said. "The governor will make recommendations on that."

Right now, the current projected surplus in Fiscal Years 2010-11 is nearly \$3.22 billion.

"Say the state is going to spend \$100 million on education in 2008. Then say that amount will double in 2009 to \$200 million. What we carry out in 2010-11 is the second number (\$200 million), which becomes \$400 million. If all the spending is of that pattern, not all of this (surplus) could be sustained," Marx said.

Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Crystal), House Finance Committee chairman, said he hopes part of the approximately \$1 billion, if it is available, can be put into the state's reserve account. The other \$1 billion should be permanent or continuing money based on projected economic growth, he said.

In general, it's the General Fund

The General Fund makes up about 60 percent of the total state budget and is funded by state resources, and this is the part of the budget that the Legislature places most of its focus.

General Fund spending is projected to be \$32.4 billion for the upcoming biennium, not including inflationary increases.

"When talking about targets and appropriations we're talking about General Fund appropriations," Marx said. He added that the General Fund numbers are also what the finance committee will spend the most time on. "Those are the parts of the budget with the most flexibility, and the Legislature has the most discretion as far as spending the money."

The General Fund includes revenues from taxes and various fees. The largest revenues, combined at about 75 percent, come from sales and individual income taxes. Other revenues come from places such as the motor vehicle sales taxes, health impact fees, tobacco payments, corporate income taxes and statewide property taxes.

Education receives about 40 percent of the revenues from the General Fund. Health and human services use up about 30 percent, property tax aids and credits use about 10 percent and higher education uses

First Reading continued on page 4

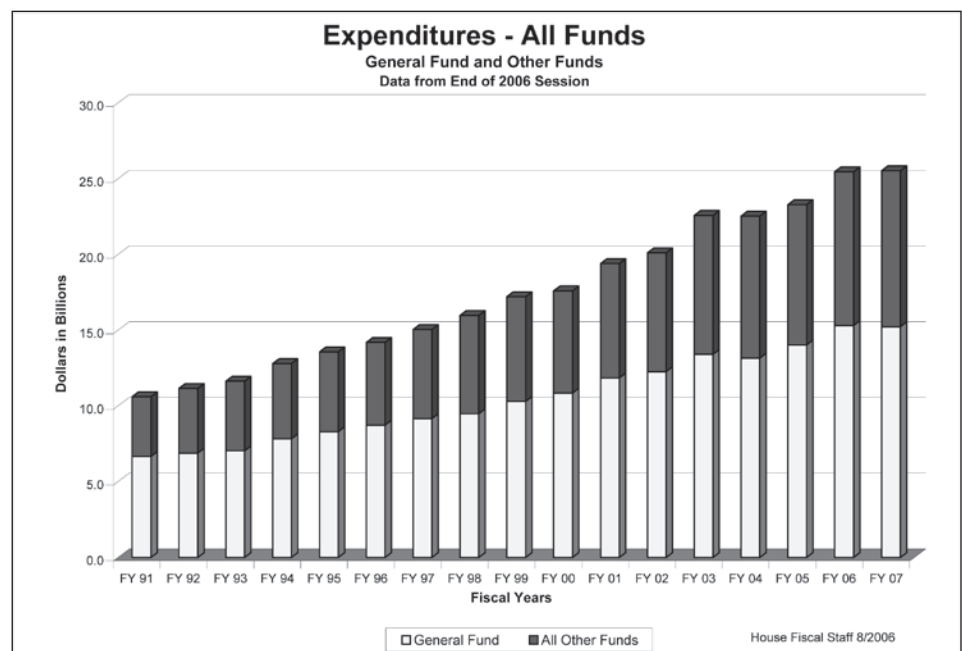


Chart courtesy of House Fiscal Analysis Department

This chart shows spending in all state funds since Fiscal Year 1991.

Crunching the numbers

The first year of the biennium is traditionally reserved for consideration of the state budget. There are two upcoming dates key to the legislative decision-making process as it relates to the budget.

Jan. 22: Gov. Tim Pawlenty is expected to release his budget priorities. During his Jan. 17 State of the State address, he said that if a spending bill is to be signed into law, it will need to clearly define expected results. "We need to stop paying for good intentions and start paying for better performance," he said.

Feb. 28 : The February Economic Forecast, to be released by the Department of Finance, provides the framework with which lawmakers craft their spending proposals. The November forecast projected a surplus for the upcoming biennium of \$2.17 billion.

When released, the budget documents will be available online at the [Minnesota Department of Finance](#).

about 9 percent. Other areas that receive the remainder include agriculture and environment, economic development, public safety, state government, transportation and the paying off of debt service.

All funds

The All Funds budget brings in all other revenues, such as transportation and transit funds and federal funds, which together comprise about 30 percent of the total state budget. Generally, the state's only discretion with federal funds is if it will accept them, Marx said. The Legislature does have the opportunity to review federal funds, which have statutory appropriations attached to them.


Examples of other funds within the All Funds include the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund, Trunk Highway Fund, Environmental Fund, Natural Resources Fund, Game and Fish Fund, Health Care Access Fund, State Government Special Revenue Fund and Special Revenue Fund.

The Special Revenue Fund and the State Government Special Revenue Fund are a conglomeration of about 1,000 accounts of funding, Marx said. Each account within the fund has its own funding source and is spent on a certain purpose

State Government Special Revenue is a specific fund that includes a group of generally health-related accounts. For example, the Board of Pharmacy collects licensing fees and then spends those fees to operate its licensing system.

Much of the spending in these special accounts is statutory appropriations, Marx said. Language in the law says revenue received is appropriated

for a specific purpose. This will stay the same if the Legislature does nothing in a bill, he said. The only way it will change is if the Legislature amends or repeals that appropriation. He added

that some of the appropriations out of these funds are direct appropriations, meaning the Legislature has to appropriate the money every two years. 

Budgeting Glossary

General Fund:

The General Fund is the major source of funding for education, health care and human services and other major functions of state government. Most of the money in this fund is not earmarked for specific purposes. It is the largest fund in the state treasury, into which receipts from most major taxes are deposited.

Budget Reserve or Reserve:

State law establishes a Budget Reserve separate from the Cash Flow Account. The reserve is like a savings account and serves as a hedge against an unforeseen economic downturn. Reserve funds may be spent in the event expenditures are forecasted to exceed revenues, but only after consultation with the Legislative Advisory Commission.

Appropriation

Authorization by the Legislature to spend money from the state treasury for purposes established in law. Appropriation language typically states: "XXXX are appropriated to a state agency for a certain purpose." The Minnesota Constitution prohibits payment of money out of the treasury unless au-

thorized by an appropriation.

Statutory (or standing) Appropriation

An appropriation made in statute authorizing the ongoing payment out of the treasury for a program. In contrast to direct appropriations, statutory appropriations need not be renewed every biennium for funding to continue.

Direct Appropriation

An appropriation for a specific amount of money, for use only during a specific time period. Appropriations are usually for a single year of the biennium; however, legislation occasionally makes single year appropriations available either year of the biennium.

Omnibus Bill or Act

A collection of separate bills or appropriations in a single, large bill or act.

Biennium

Minnesota has a two-year (biennial) budget period. The Legislature appropriates the major portion of the biennial budget in the odd-numbered year session, and makes adjust-

ments as needed during the even-numbered years. For example, the 2008-09 biennium is scheduled to begin at 12:01 a.m. July 1, 2007 and end at midnight June 30, 2009.

Forecast

Each year in November and February, the Department of Finance is required to project state revenues and expenditures based on current law. This prediction is the forecast upon which the governor and Legislature base their budget proposals. Within the forecast process, the Department of Revenue is required to forecast revenues to be received by school districts, counties and towns. The Finance Department is also required to submit a debt capacity forecast at the same times as the revenue and expenditure forecast.

Fiscal Year

The 12-month period on which the state's budget is based; it runs from July 1 to June 30. School district fiscal years are the same as the state fiscal year. County and city fiscal years are the same as the calendar year. The federal fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

Minnesota State Agencies

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| | (800) 765-5043 | Revenue | |
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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Jan. 11-18 and other House activity.

CHILDREN

Child care support services

Early child care and education are two of the major issues facing legislators this session. Members of the Early Childhood Learning Finance Division of the House Finance Committee heard background information Jan. 16.

"Child care provides both care and education for children while parents work or attend school," said Deb Swenson-Klatt, manager of the Department of Human Services early childhood development program. "Nearly 700,000 Minnesota children need child care while their parents work."

A recent study found that just 25 percent of Minnesota child care centers were "good quality" on the environmental rating scale. Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls) found that disturbing. "What about the other 75 percent?"

"One of the places that child care centers scored lower were health and safety, practices around hand washing and diapering; there are very stringent standards," Swenson-Klatt said. "It's relatively easy for those practices to be fixed; it doesn't cost a lot of money to wash hands."

Katie Williams, director of early childhood programs at the Minneapolis YMCA, said the programs help prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. The programs, which promote social, physical, language and cognitive development, allow children to learn at their own pace.

No long-term study of students that have gone through the program has been conducted, but Williams said anecdotal evidence from teachers in the school system shows that the children come well-prepared.

Help is available for families to prepare their youngest members.

Cherie Kotilinek, manager of the department's child care assistance program, said the program provides assistance for 29,870 children in an average month.

The program's purpose is to provide financial subsidies to help low-income families pay for child care. That way parents may pursue employment or education leading to employment knowing their children are well cared for and getting prepared to enter school.

ENERGY

Harnessing wind power

Up to 25 percent of all electricity used in Minnesota could be reliably generated by wind, according to the results of a new study.

The findings of the [Minnesota Wind Integration Study](#), commissioned by the Legislature in 2005, were presented to the [Energy Finance and Policy Division](#) of the [House Finance Committee](#) Jan. 17. The division took no action.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether Minnesota can integrate, in a reliable and cost-effective manner, its wind-power capacity up to 20 percent of all retail electric energy sales in the state by 2020. The commission studied the feasibility and cost impacts of wind power integration at 15, 20 and 25 percent of total energy consumption.

Ken Wolf, reliability administrator for the [Minnesota Public Utilities Commission](#), said that despite the variability and uncertainty inherent in wind-generated power, the study shows conclusively that wind can effectively be used for up to 25 percent of the state's electricity.

Wolf said the 18-month, \$700,000 study utilized "rigorous" methods and nationally renowned wind-power experts and yielded impeccable results.

"You will not get a reputable source contradicting these numbers. They're solid," Wolf said.

As to the effect on consumers' pocketbooks, Wolf said the overall rate impact depends on the overall volume of wind available to utilize in a given year. Generally, however, the cost would amount to anywhere between \$3.80 and \$13.93 for a consumer whose annual electric bill totaled \$967.61 — which happens to be Wolf's annual electric bill.

ENVIRONMENT

Great Lakes compact

Minnesota could become the first state to sign a Great Lakes water usage compact more than six years in the making, if a bill approved by a House committee becomes law.

[HF110](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), would enact the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a proposed agreement between eight states and two Canadian provinces that

would prohibit diversions of water outside of the Great Lakes basins.

The [House Environment and Natural Resources Committee](#) approved the bill Jan. 16. It now goes to the [House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee](#).

The compact is the result of years of negotiations through the Council of Great Lakes Governors, a nonpartisan partnership between the eight Great Lakes states — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. To become effective, it must be signed into law by the governors of all eight states, ratified by Congress, and then agreed to by the Canadian authorities.

The compact also establishes that the states and Canadian provinces involved would implement conservation and efficiency programs, and use consistent standards to evaluate the environmental and economic impacts of proposed uses of Great Lakes water.

Allison Wolf, legislative director for the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, said that diverting water from the Great Lakes to other areas results in lower water levels, which has a "significant environmental and economic impact."

Department of Natural Resources Division of Waters Director Kent Lokkesmoe said passage of the compact would not result in the need for any new laws in Minnesota, which is already "ahead of all the other Great Lakes states" in terms of Great Lakes water usage legislation.

"This is substantially less restrictive than what Minnesota currently has," Lokkesmoe said, referring to the state's laws governing the usage of water resources.

A companion bill, [SF38](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

GOVERNMENT

Continuing appropriations

Several legislators have introduced bills that would avoid a partial state government shutdown like that of July 2005.

The [House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee](#) approved one measure Jan. 18, and referred it to the [House Finance Committee](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#)

(DFL-Mpls), [HF7](#) would continue baseline appropriations set in the previous fiscal year for one year, if an appropriations bill is not passed by the Legislature. Addressing continuing appropriations upon a legislative impasse was one of the most popular issues in a survey of House members last session, said Loeffler, who noted that several other states have similar legislation, including Wisconsin and Rhode Island.

Several failed amendments included a set deadline of the first Monday in May of an odd-numbered year in which an appropriations bill must be passed by the Legislature. [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said setting time limits instead of continuing funding forces legislators to get their jobs done.

The reason the constitutional deadline is the first Monday after the third Saturday in May is because it takes that amount of time to do the work, countered [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls).

A failed amendment offered by [Rep. Sarah Anderson](#) (R-Plymouth) would have limited legislators from receiving per diem living expenses during the time in which continuing appropriations are in effect. The measure would put extra pressure on legislators to come to funding resolutions, she said.

If continuing appropriations were in effect during the following session, legislators would not be able to collect on expenses, noted [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker). Because many members come from Greater Minnesota, he couldn't support the amendment, he said.

[Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, noted the change could give additional power to the governor. If he or she wanted to increase funding appropriations in a year when legislators wanted to decrease the amounts, the governor could simply veto a funding bill thereby allowing for baseline appropriations from the previous year to take effect. He said those issues will be discussed as the bill moves forward.

The bill has no direct Senate companion; however, Sen [David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) has offered a similar proposal, [SF46](#).

HEALTH

Covering all children

Insuring Minnesota's children was at the forefront of the Jan. 16 House Health and Human Services Committee meeting, with discussion of the so-called "Children's Health Security Act."

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), committee chairman and sponsor of [HF1](#), called the



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Representing the Minnesota Universal Health Care Coalition, Dr. John T. Garland testifies in support of the so-called "Children's Health Security Act" during the Jan. 16 House Health and Human Services Committee meeting.

proposal a practical path to ensuring that all Minnesota children receive quality health care by, in part, breaking barriers to coverage and simplifying the complex public health care system currently in place.

"We have about 68,000 kids in Minnesota that are lacking health coverage," Thissen said. "I think our state, as much as any other state, can accomplish meaningful coverage for all kids. It's an achievable goal."

The legislation proposes health care coverage for all children in Minnesota through a two-phase process. The first would absorb children whose families earn less than 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines into a public system that would include and combine MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance, the state's current health care programs. The second proposes the establishment of a bicameral task force to deliberate how best to provide health care for all children, regardless of income. The task force would present its recommendations to the Legislature by January 2009.

The committee took no action on the bill, which has no Senate companion.

Nine testifiers spoke in support of the bill, including representatives from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition.

Denise Herrmann, a school nurse in the

St. Paul School District and a pediatric nurse practitioner, said health care is not only an issue of health, but one of education.

"It's an old cliché, but it's true: healthy kids learn better," she said.

[Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) wondered if a state-funded program could negatively affect the health care industry.

"MinnesotaCare probably pays in the order of 50 percent of what hospitals and providers would like to charge," he said. "And, health plans are probably paying 70 percent of what they would like to charge. If we suddenly take every kid in the state and put them into a plan that's paying less than what it costs to treat those kids, what's that going to do to the health care system?"

HOUSING

Connecting housing to health

At first glance, housing and public health may not seem like complementary subjects. Wrong, says [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairwoman of the Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division of the House Finance Committee.

"People's housing has a big impact on their health, period," she said, using as examples

lead poisoning, mold, even homelessness.

"Let's say you become homeless and you get bronchitis," she said. "Everything in our life is interconnected."

Clark, who worked as a public health nurse, plans to deliberate these issues this biennium. She also expects the division to work on public health crises including obesity, tobacco use and rogue viruses; accessible and affordable housing; and workforce housing. Clark will also appoint two subcommittees, known loosely as "environmental health" and "healthy housing," to more deeply inspect the union of housing and public health.

"I think it's a fabulous opportunity to see how these two subjects fit together," she said.

Dozens of programs fall under the purview of the division, including those administered by the Housing Finance Agency and nearly all in the Health Department. The division will also direct funding for several programs in the Department of Human Services, the Veterans Home Board and 15 health-related boards.

According to Clark, the division will hear overviews by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Department of Health, and review past budgets in upcoming meetings.

"I want to make sure we're not just looking at current budgets, but where we've been before," she said.

METRO AFFAIRS

No commission elimination, yet

The spirit of bipartisanship superseded the desire for elimination at the Jan. 17 House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee meeting.

Instead of voting on HF15, which proposes the elimination of the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government, Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center), the committee chairwoman and bill sponsor, presented it for introduction and discussion only.

Hilstrom said that in the spirit of cooperation on the first bill presented to the committee, "I think that it's important that we keep things in a bipartisan fashion."

Hilstrom testified that the commission, made up of seven members from the House and seven from the Senate, has limited authority that only allows it to provide recommendations. Any reports from the Metropolitan Council, Hilstrom contends, should go to legislative committees with jurisdiction over metropolitan affairs.

"I believe there should be oversight," Hilstrom said, "and (this committee) should do it."

Created in 2001, the commission, which

Hilstrom said has met only twice since 2005, was established to oversee the Metropolitan Council's operating and capital budgets, work programs and capital improvement program. The council, a 17-member panel appointed by the governor, works with local communities to provide efficient growth of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) and Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) favor keeping the commission intact.

While Holberg suggested that the commission could be more effective if it were given more authority, Buesgens said that he believed the commission helps to shed light on issues important to the metropolitan area.

A companion bill, SF19, sponsored by Sen. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the full Senate.

TAXES

Lack of tax compliance

Minnesotans are failing to pay more than \$1 billion annually in taxes, according to a tax compliance report issued by the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

Released in March 2006, the report was never brought before the House Taxes Committee in any substantive way before its Jan. 17 meeting, said Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), committee chairwoman. No committee action was taken.

The report focuses on income tax and sales and use taxes, which accounted for 75 percent of state tax revenue in Fiscal Year 2005, said Deborah Parker Junod, project manager. One application of the use tax is its application to purchases from out-of-state vendors, like catalog sales.

"Minnesota does have a tax compliance problem," she said.

In 1999, taxpayers should have paid \$5.7 billion in income taxes, but paid only \$5.1 billion. In 2000, taxpayers should have paid \$4.3 billion in sales and use taxes, but paid only \$3.8 billion.

According to Junod, taxes owed have increased by about 8 percent per year since Fiscal Year 2000.

For the income tax gap, most people file but underreport their income, Junod said. Most of that comes from the self-employed, accounting for \$475 million in underpaid tax liabilities. Another \$124 million is from people who didn't file a return at all.

For the sales and use tax gap, people and businesses who did not pay the use tax accounted for about \$272 million in delinquencies. Businesses that didn't collect and remit the sales

tax accounted for \$180 million.

"It's neither feasible nor desirable to collect that entire amount," Junod said. Rather, the goal is to close the gap over time.

To encourage long-term voluntary compliance, Junod said the Department of Revenue educates and assists taxpayers to help them comply voluntarily, identifies those who may be noncompliant, audits tax returns, collects payments due and tries to develop ways to simplify the tax system.

Junod said some taxpayers know they owe taxes and reported such on their tax returns, but just don't pay them.

TECHNOLOGY

U stumps for bioscience funding

Officials from the University of Minnesota made their pitch for increased state funding for bioscience to the [House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee](#) Jan. 16 and 17.

Frank Cerra, senior vice president for health sciences at the university's Academic Health Center, said that the university is being "out-invested" by competing schools.

Cerra said the state needs to invest in new bioscience research facilities in order for the university to be able to attract and retain top-notch faculty and maintain its status as a leader in the field.

"If we want to sustain our growth and grow as an area for biotechnology, we need investment now," he said.

University Vice President for Research Tim Mulcahy echoed that sentiment, citing aggressive competition from schools like the University of California, San Francisco, which is currently in the process of constructing a 2.65 million square-foot biomedical research facility.

"We need state of the art facilities," Mulcahy said, adding that faculty salaries at the university are not competitive with those of its peer institutions.

Touting the economic benefits of bioscience research to the state, Mulcahy stressed the university's successful partnerships with the private sector, and said such partnerships are essential to keeping biotech companies in Minnesota.

Cerra said some of the more direct positive impacts of bioscience research and development could be new treatments for Alzheimer's disease and compulsive gambling and a cure for diabetes.

"This is what we can do if we have the investment," he said.

The committee took no action.

2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives

| District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- | District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 48B | Abeler, Jim (R) | 203 | 1729 | 40B | Lenczewski, Ann (DFL) | 509 | 4218 |
| 19A | Anderson, Bruce (R) | 201 | 5063 | 66A | Lesch, John (DFL) | 537 | 4224 |
| 43A | Anderson, Sarah (R) | 229 | 5511 | 30A | Liebling, Tina (DFL) | 393 | 0573 |
| 3A | Anzelc, Tom (DFL) | 417 | 4936 | 1B | Lieder, Bernard (DFL) | 423 | 5091 |
| 39B | Atkins, Joe (DFL) | 503 | 4192 | 55A | Lillie, Leon (DFL) | 353 | 1188 |
| 35A | Beard, Michael (R) | 207 | 8872 | 59A | Loeffler, Diane (DFL) | 349 | 4219 |
| 43B | Benson, John (DFL) | 517 | 9934 | 37A | Madore, Shelley (DFL) | 507 | 5506 |
| 33B | Berns, John (R) | 311 | 4315 | 22A | Magnus, Doug (R) | 217 | 5505 |
| 57A | Bigham, Karla (DFL) | 529 | 4342 | 67A | Mahoney, Tim (DFL) | 591 | 4277 |
| 25B | Bly, David (DFL) | 557 | 7065 | 65B | Mariani, Carlos (DFL) | 563 | 9714 |
| 25A | Brod, Laura (R) | 321 | 4229 | 9B | Marquart, Paul (DFL) | 597 | 6829 |
| 27A | Brown, Robin (DFL) | 337 | 8216 | 38A | Masin, Sandra (DFL) | 527 | 3533 |
| 23B | Brynaert, Kathy (DFL) | 421 | 3248 | 53B | McFarlane, Carol (R) | 223 | 5363 |
| 35B | Buesgens, Mark (R) | 307 | 5185 | 57B | McNamara, Denny (R) | 271 | 3135 |
| 56A | Bunn, Julie (DFL) | 521 | 4244 | 4A | Moe, Frank (DFL) | 369 | 5516 |
| 45B | Carlson, Lyndon (DFL) | 479 | 4255 | 40A | Morgan, Will (DFL) | 531 | 4212 |
| 61A | Clark, Karen (DFL) | 471 | 0294 | 23A | Morrow, Terry (DFL) | 415 | 8634 |
| 24B | Cornish, Tony (R) | 281 | 4240 | 58A | Mullery, Joe (DFL) | 367 | 4262 |
| 62A | Davnie, Jim (DFL) | 545 | 0173 | 64A | Murphy, Erin (DFL) | 413 | 8799 |
| 52B | Dean, Matt (R) | 327 | 3018 | 6B | Murphy, Mary (DFL) | 343 | 2676 |
| 49A | DeLaForest, Chris (R) | 323 | 4231 | 46A | Nelson, Michael V. (DFL) | 569 | 3751 |
| 29A | Demmer, Randy (R) | 225 | 9236 | 10A | Nornes, Bud (R) | 277 | 4946 |
| 52A | Dettmer, Bob (R) | 329 | 4124 | 29B | Norton, Kim (DFL) | 387 | 9249 |
| 6A | Dill, David (DFL) | 571 | 2190 | 1A | Olin, Dave (DFL) | 593 | 9635 |
| 47A | Dittrich, Denise (DFL) | 371 | 5513 | 16B | Olson, Mark (R) | 301 | 4237 |
| 58B | Dominguez, Augustine "Willie" (DFL) | 539 | 8659 | 11B | Otremba, Mary Ellen (DFL) | 445 | 3201 |
| 12B | Doty, Al (DFL) | 433 | 4247 | 37B | Ozment, Dennis (R) | 283 | 4306 |
| 17A | Eastlund, Rob (R) | 243 | 5364 | 42B | Paulsen, Erik (R) | 309 | 7449 |
| 2A | Eken, Kent (DFL) | 575 | 9918 | 64B | Paymar, Michael (DFL) | 543 | 4199 |
| 19B | Emmer, Tom (R) | 261 | 4336 | 31A | Pelowski Jr., Gene (DFL) | 491 | 8637 |
| 41A | Erhardt, Ron (R) | 245 | 4363 | 32A | Peppin, Joyce (R) | 331 | 7806 |
| 16A | Erickson, Sondra (R) | 279 | 6746 | 20A | Peterson, Aaron (DFL) | 451 | 4228 |
| 8B | Faust, Tim (DFL) | 567 | 0518 | 41B | Peterson, Neil W. (R) | 213 | 7803 |
| 21B | Finstad, Brad (R) | 251 | 9303 | 45A | Peterson, Sandra (DFL) | 345 | 4176 |
| 26B | Fritz, Patti (DFL) | 551 | 8237 | 27B | Poppe, Jeanne (DFL) | 487 | 4193 |
| 53A | Gardner, Paul (DFL) | 581 | 2907 | 5A | Rukavina, Tom (DFL) | 477 | 0170 |
| 36B | Garofalo, Pat (R) | 221 | 1069 | 26A | Ruth, Connie (R) | 291 | 5368 |
| 15A | Gottwalt, Steve (R) | 231 | 6316 | 42A | Ruud, Maria (DFL) | 515 | 3964 |
| 54A | Greiling, Mindy (DFL) | 381 | 5387 | 2B | Sailer, Brita (DFL) | 577 | 4265 |
| 24A | Gunther, Bob (R) | 289 | 3240 | 54B | Scalze, Bev (DFL) | 357 | 7153 |
| 48A | Hackbarth, Tom (R) | 209 | 2439 | 21A | Seifert, Marty (R) | 267 | 5374 |
| 22B | Hamilton, Rod (R) | 215 | 5373 | 5B | Sertich, Anthony "Tony" (DFL) | 459 | 0172 |
| 39A | Hansen, Rick (DFL) | 401 | 6828 | 14A | Severson, Dan (R) | 233 | 7808 |
| 66B | Hausman, Alice (DFL) | 453 | 3824 | 18A | Shimanski, Ron (R) | 227 | 1534 |
| 15B | Haws, Larry (DFL) | 473 | 6612 | 44A | Simon, Steve (DFL) | 375 | 9889 |
| 13A | Heidgerken, Bud (R) | 237 | 4317 | 10B | Simpson, Dean (R) | 295 | 4293 |
| 46B | Hilstrom, Debra (DFL) | 379 | 3709 | 55B | Slawik, Nora (DFL) | 403 | 7807 |
| 8A | Hilty, Bill (DFL) | 559 | 4308 | 63B | Slocum, Linda (DFL) | 523 | 7158 |
| 36A | Holberg, Mary Liz (R) | 303 | 6926 | 33A | Smith, Steve (R) | 253 | 9188 |
| 34B | Hoppe, Joe (R) | 317 | 5066 | 3B | Solberg, Loren (DFL) | 443 | 2365 |
| 60B | Hornstein, Frank (DFL) | 437 | 9281 | 28B | Sviggum, Steve (R) | 247 | 2273 |
| 47B | Hortman, Melissa (DFL) | 377 | 4280 | 56B | Swails, Marsha (DFL) | 409 | 1147 |
| 14B | Hosch, Larry (DFL) | 565 | 4373 | 65A | Thao, Cy (DFL) | 359 | 5158 |
| 4B | Howes, Larry (R) | 287 | 2451 | 63A | Thissen, Paul (DFL) | 351 | 5375 |
| 7A | Huntley, Thomas (DFL) | 585 | 2228 | 51B | Tillberry, Tom (DFL) | 501 | 5510 |
| 7B | Jaros, Mike (DFL) | 583 | 4246 | 49B | Tingelstad, Kathy (R) | 255 | 5369 |
| 67B | Johnson, Sheldon (DFL) | 549 | 4201 | 31B | Tschumper, Ken (DFL) | 431 | 9278 |
| 13B | Juhnke, Al (DFL) | 485 | 6206 | 18B | Urdahl, Dean (R) | 239 | 4344 |
| 59B | Kahn, Phyllis (DFL) | 365 | 4257 | 62B | Wagenius, Jean (DFL) | 449 | 4200 |
| 17B | Kalin, Jeremy (DFL) | 579 | 5377 | 61B | Walker, Neva (DFL) | 553 | 7152 |
| 60A | Kelliher, Margaret Anderson (DFL) | 463 | 0171 | 12A | Ward, John (DFL) | 533 | 4333 |
| 50B | Knuth, Kate (DFL) | 429 | 0141 | 38B | Wardlow, Lynn (R) | 241 | 4128 |
| 20B | Koenen, Lyle (DFL) | 439 | 4346 | 30B | Welti, Andy (DFL) | 389 | 4378 |
| 34A | Kohls, Paul (R) | 313 | 4282 | 11A | Westrom, Torrey (R) | 273 | 4929 |
| 51A | Kranz, Scott (DFL) | 411 | 4226 | 44B | Winkler, Ryan (DFL) | 525 | 7026 |
| 50A | Laine, Carolyn (DFL) | 407 | 4331 | 28A | Wollschlager, Sandy (DFL) | 335 | 8635 |
| 9A | Lanning, Morrie (R) | 259 | 5515 | 32B | Zellers, Kurt (R) | 315 | 5502 |

*All rooms are in the State Office Building unless otherwise noted, St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Forging ahead

Pawlenty stresses education reform in State of the State

By Nick Busse

A slew of education reforms, including dramatic changes to the state's high schools, topped Gov. Tim Pawlenty's legislative wish list in his annual [State of the State address](#) Jan. 17.

"American high schools are obsolete," Pawlenty declared, proposing a new high school structure that emphasizes college-level coursework, work-based learning and internships.

Also on Pawlenty's agenda for the session: a comprehensive renewable energy plan, improved health care access and cost containment measures, increased government accountability to taxpayers, and a veterans and military benefits package.

"The state of our state is great, but we can make Minnesota even better," Pawlenty said, echoing sentiments expressed in his previous State of the State speeches.

But Pawlenty delivered this address, his fifth, against the backdrop of a new political landscape. With the DFL now firmly in control of both chambers of the Legislature,

Pawlenty stressed the need for bipartisan cooperation — but made it clear he would resist any attempt to raise taxes.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again: Minnesotans are not under-taxed," he said.

Citing an estimated \$2 billion budget surplus, Pawlenty urged lawmakers to pass tax relief legislation for property owners, veterans and others. Specifically, he advocated a cap on property taxes for local units of government — an idea that many Democrats have already rejected.

Education

Pawlenty spoke at length about the need for improvements to the state's education system.

In his budget proposal, scheduled for release Jan. 22, Pawlenty said he will include a general funding increase of 2 percent per year, per school district, for the next two years. In addition, he said he will offer a 2 percent per year "performance bonus" for those districts that earn a three-star rating on their Minnesota School Report Cards.

For secondary education, Pawlenty called for the creation of what he calls "3R" high schools — for "rigor," "relevance" and "results" — and proposed \$75 million in pay-for-performance funding for the initiative. Under the plan, "3R" students would be required to complete a full year of college while in high school.

Pawlenty's other proposed school reforms include:

- new funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs;
- funding for schools to help put a focus on science, technology, engineering and math;
- increased opportunities for online learning;
- tougher math standards for all students;
- individual graduation plans for students in eighth grade and above; and
- a requirement that all students complete four years of a foreign language in order to graduate from high school.

Pawlenty rejected Democrats' call for all-day kindergarten, calling it "enormously expensive." Instead, he proposed an "early childhood scholarship program" that would provide up to \$4,000 for "at-risk" students to attend a kindergarten readiness program of the parents' choice.

Health Care

On the issue of health care, Pawlenty advocated a comprehensive approach that simultaneously focuses on "improving access, improving quality and containing costs."

As a start, he proposed expanding health care coverage to all children under age 21 with a household income of \$60,000 or less for a family of four. He also proposed modernizing MinnesotaCare in such a way as to allow for increased consumer choice and provider competition.

"While market approaches may not work for all medical procedures, we know that engaged, motivated consumers are a powerful force in controlling cost, especially when price and quality measurements are easily understood," Pawlenty said.

In addition, Pawlenty said any health care reform package this year should include:

- creation of an "interoperable electronic medical record system;"
- an overhaul of the state's mental health system;



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Gov. Tim Pawlenty delivers his State of the State address in the House Chamber.

State of State continued on page 23

A costly construction

Renovating and upgrading the State Capitol

By PATTY OSTBERG

Most people would think twice about investing in a home if they saw a for sale brochure that read:

“Beautiful house with marble floors, six types of native Minnesota stone used throughout the building’s construction, antiques include furniture and original Civil War paintings and murals. Interior modifications needed to meet state code requirements including upgrades and repairs to heating and mechanical systems, air conditioning infrastructure; accessibility requirements; safety and security systems upgrades; communication and technology upgrade; and extensive repairs needed due to water damage.”

While the State Capitol building stands as a beautiful mark in time, behind the Civil War paintings, flags and murals are grossly deteriorating arteries. And according to a pre-design renovation plan for the State House, the investment needed could total an estimated \$260 million.

The State Government Finance Division of the House Finance Committee embarked on

a nooks and crannies walking tour Jan. 16 to see firsthand the proposed renovation areas.

Into the underbelly

As legislators and staff climbed metal stairs going over a fire pump, further down the narrow walkway were the main fire control panels to the building. In case of a crisis or fire emergency, a person would have to scramble

over the metal stairs to get to the end of the walkway to shut off the valves, said Michael Bjornberg, principal project manager with Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, the firm that created the renovation plan.

The group continued to wind through the building’s underbelly, restrictive walkways and enclosed mechanical spaces revealing the most recent fixes from the 1960s and 1980s.

While emergency repairs such as new supply fans, coils and filters have been made, many infrastructure elements are still in their old casings. The dated infrastructure can’t supply sufficient quantities of air for Capitol spaces to meet outdoor air requirements or state codes to meet health issues.

Bjornberg said water infiltration is the “No. 1 enemy” of any old building. The Capitol is no different.

As the group made its way into a small retired judicial dining area near the Rathskeller Cafe, the effects of water damage are apparent as water drops stained an outdoor-themed oil painting spanning a lighted inset.

Security concerns

With thousands of visitors every year, from school groups to international travelers, building security would also be addressed in the renovation.

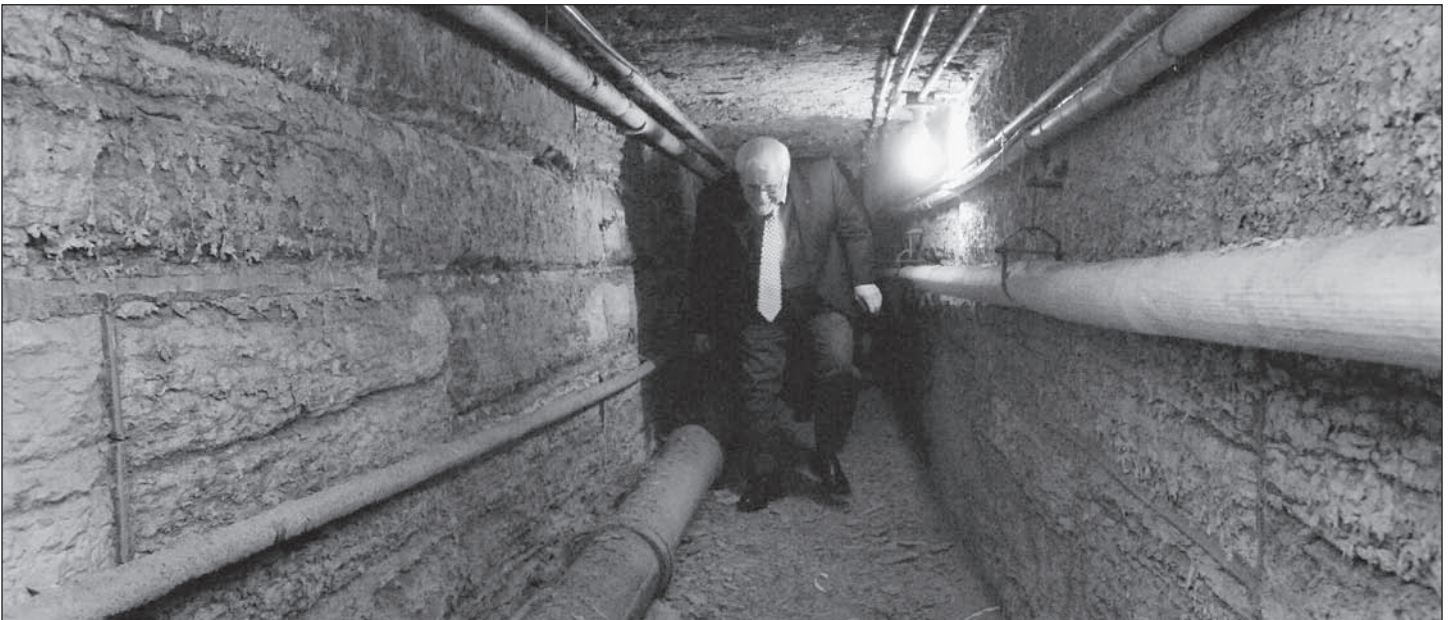


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Bill Hilty and members of the State Government Finance Division of the House Finance Committee squeeze single-file through a subterranean chamber in the bowels of the Capitol during a Jan. 16 tour of proposed Capitol renovation projects.

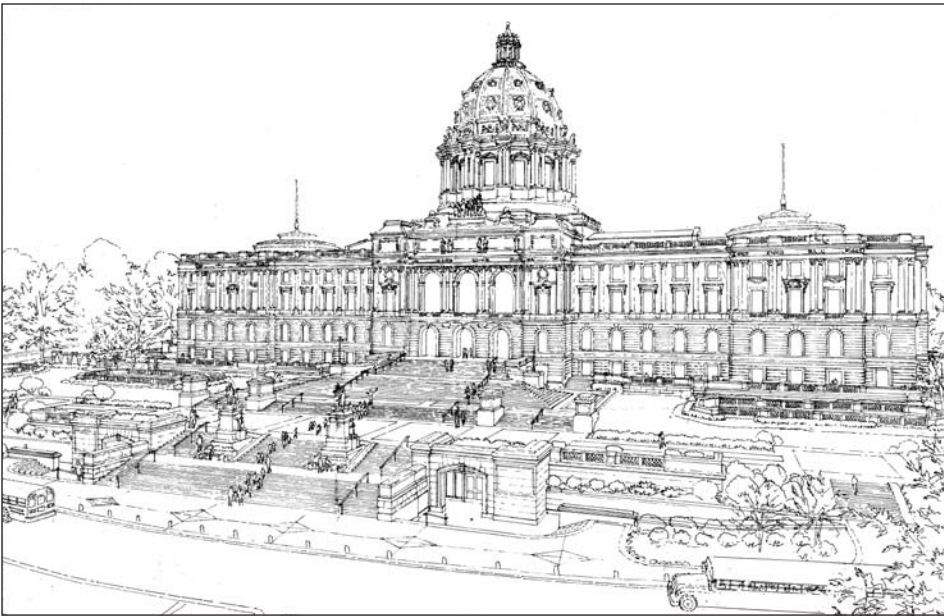


Image courtesy of the Hammel, Green and Abrahamson

A rendering of the Capitol renovation after construction. Note the visitor center entrance below the front steps.

An examination for the Department of Homeland Defense by the Minnesota National Guard found concerns, including pipes and telecommunications wiring systems that are fully exposed along the ceiling of the portion of the Capitol Complex tunnel system that runs through the building.

Concern was also expressed that vehicles can now pull up to the Capitol without any security protections. Cars, trucks and delivery vehicles can also park near the air ventilation system that is intended to pump fresh air into building spaces.

The fixes

The pre-design plan uses a concept called “found space,” in which underutilized areas are converted into efficient and productive “people” space.

One potential addition is a new visitor welcome center where visitors could be greeted and given an orientation of the building. This would also include rest rooms and a gift shop.

This center would be located in the front of the building, and would also serve as a

Other states’ capitol renovations

As the nation’s state capitols age, so do the interior and exteriors of the buildings.

Because they must function on a daily basis, several states are addressing the technological and engineering restoration needs with costs ranging into several hundred million dollars.

A \$287 million restoration of the Texas State Capitol, completed in 1993, included entirely new plumbing, electrical, fire protection and communications systems, water-conserving irrigation and handicap accessible walkways.

A three-year renovation of the Virginia State Capitol is scheduled to be completed in April for \$83 million. According to its Web site, “the renovated Capitol will have new mechanical and electrical systems; a new roof, elevators, stairwells, and legislative meeting space; full accessibility for the disabled; the original 1908 color schemes and décor in the legislative chambers and rotunda; restored original Jeffersonian millwork; and a 27,000 square foot underground extension providing additional work space, a new secure visitor entrance ... and a visitor center with educational and museum exhibits.”

Other recent renovations and their costs:

- Utah — currently underway, \$210 million
- Kansas — currently underway, \$162 million
- Wisconsin — completed in 2001, \$145 million
- Ohio — completed in 1996, \$129 million
- Michigan — completed in 1992, \$58 million

security checkpoint for all visitors coming into the building, according to the plan.

Security changes would place the underground tunnel’s exposed pipes in secure vaults, along with mechanical and electrical components. Where those mechanical and electrical spaces are currently located, underground space would be reconstructed into offices or usable space and lit with natural light through light wells.

Under the plan, Senate hearing rooms would be expanded, as would office space so that all Senate employees could be housed in the building. Now, Republican senators and their staff are in the State Office Building.

A 500-seat auditorium would be constructed for multi-purpose use, including use as temporary legislative chambers during the restoration process.

The plan calls for renovation to occur in three phases, starting after the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, with completion in late-2014 or early-2015. Although no funding plans have been introduced, the pre-design plan suggests some funding be allocated during the 2007 session, so work could begin by 2008.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Michael Bjornberg, principal project manager, shows members of the State Government Finance Division of the House Finance Committee the depths of the Capitol once used for civil defense storage during a Jan. 16 tour of needed building renovations.

After a bonding year

Projects and scopes can change, sort of

By PATTY OSTBERG

What happened to the nearly \$1 billion in capital investments passed into law in the 2005 and 2006 sessions?

The answer is not clear.

The Department of Finance keeps track of bonded money and the financing of department projects, but tracking specific projects can also be in the hands of individual agencies and departments, said Assistant Commissioner of Finance Peter Sausen.

Of the \$930.8 million in bonds authorized last year, the Finance Department reports that \$45.9 million has been spent on a variety of projects as of Jan. 10, 2007.

For example, the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system have spent a combined \$12 million on asset preservation and replacement projects. A total of \$5.6 million has been spent on bridge bonds, but to find the specific amounts for each project one would have to contact the Department of Transportation.

Completing a project

In order to sell bonds for project funding, the Finance Department gathers information from agencies to determine how much approved bonded money they are expecting for cash flow in the next year. With that in mind, the department enters the bond market to sell, hopefully on a good day with low interest rates, said Sausen.

Two sales, totaling \$435 million, were completed last fall. Breaking it into two sales protects the state from a bad market day,

Sausen said. Those bond issue statements are available online and specifically list projects and monies for agencies and organizations.

When it comes to constructing buildings, it can take up to a year after money is bonded to complete the building preparation and design phase, and a second year for construction to actually begin. The process can take years to come to fruition, depending on the intricacies of the project.

For example, in 2003 the Legislature approved a \$25 million grant for the new Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. The grant money can be traced to a July 22, 2003, bond sale. The new theater opened in July 2006.

What if the project scope changes?

Set in Minnesota law is a four-year window in which the money must be used. Changes to previous bonding requests must be approved by a supermajority of the Legislature. Sometimes projects don't begin right away, but the entity still wants to use

Of the \$930.8 million in bonds authorized last year, the Finance Department reports that \$45.9 million has been spent on projects as of Jan. 10, 2007.

the appropriation for its intended purpose, or a slight change in authority of the funds is needed. Those changes can be made in bonding law in following years.

For example, several changes were made in 2005 for projects that were originally bonded for in the previous eight years. An appropriation to the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission for athletic fields in Blaine and to develop a children's golf course that was in the 1998 law was once again approved. An appropriation to the city of Two Harbors for the harbor of refuge and marina was extended for use until June 2006. The project was first bonded for in 2000.

What if the project is cancelled?

A report is required Jan. 1 of every odd-numbered year on the cancellation of General Fund and bond-financed projects authorized more than four years prior to that date.

Bonding continued on page 23



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Many projects take years to come to fruition after a bonding proposal has been approved. A July 22, 2003 bond sale raised revenue for the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. The new theater opened in July 2006.

From ideas to law

The authors' words provide substance for the bill's sponsors

By CRAIG GREEN

All laws start out as ideas. In Minnesota, a bill is an idea for a new law, a change or repeal of a current law, or an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution.

Nearly 6,300 House and Senate files were introduced in the last biennium, and members have started the introduction process for this biennium. On the second day of session, 67 bills were offered by House members for consideration. Twenty bills were offered in the Senate. As of Jan. 18, House and Senate members have introduced a combined 381 bills.

The subjects covered by the first bills include children's health care, property tax relief, education funding, cell phone usage while driving a motor vehicle, naming a highway after Walter Mondale and a request to designate a trail for all-terrain vehicle use.

Yet, before the bills hit the floor, they had to be written. Research was done, drafts were written and language, punctuation, grammar and references were double-checked. Someone, or some group, sat down to begin writing what would be offered for consideration.

But who did it? Who actually wrote the bills?

Officially, anyone can write a draft of a bill: legislators, private citizens, lobbyists or citizen-action groups. There is no statutory requirement or restrictions for producing language for a bill. But the reality is that it takes a firm grasp of legislative law, legal terminology and experience to properly craft a bill. That being the case, most of the bills considered at the House and Senate are initially drafted by a select group of staff who understand the ins and outs of the language of bills. You can find many of these writers in a trio of nonpartisan offices, the House Research Department, the Senate Counsel, Research and Fiscal Analysis Office and the Office of the Revisor of Statutes.

"We've started drafts with material from the back of an envelope, or it may come in as an idea on a phone message and we'll turn it into legislative language," said Patrick



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Revisor of Statutes Michele Timmons and the Minnesota Revisor's Manual with Styles and Forms.

McCormack, director of the House Research Department. "Our job is to ask, 'What's your intent?' and then try to make it clear."

Working with a nonpartisan staff of attorneys, policy experts and administrative staff trained in word processing, editing and document production, McCormack said that every bill can differ in its needs. Sometimes there will be requests to start bills from scratch; some bills will simply be revisions to bills that were submitted during a previous session; and some bills will require multiple meetings with the sponsor of the bill, multiple drafts of the document and a team of staff.

"Words of the law tend to be driven by the tools of the trade, the ways to write legal language, but there is often no one way, a right way, to put it down on a piece of paper," said McCormack. "In many cases, we're just starting it out."

The Office of the Revisor of Statutes also works with legislators and others preparing

"A drafter should draft a bill with knowledge of its legal context and the probable relationship of the old law with the new provision. A drafter should draft a bill with knowledge of the constitutional, statutory, and common law principles on the construction of statutes,"

— (Minnesota Revisor's Manual with Styles and Forms, p. 33)

and producing bills. Revisor Michele Timmons said that her office can also receive ideas for new bills from legislators that are written on the back of a napkin, while other bills come in fully drafted.


In addition to drafting, once a bill is completed and ready to be introduced in the House, the revisor's office gives the bill a number and prepares the companion bill for the Senate, if the bill also has a Senate sponsor. Both of the completed bills are then presented to the individual sponsors.

What makes the office even more unique is that they perform the final review of each bill before it is introduced into the House or Senate. The reason for this, said Timmons, is to check and control the quality of the legislative materials.

Striving for perfection can produce some stress-filled days, especially later in session when omnibus bills — usually a compilation of many other bills — are being put together.

Timmons, who spent 18 years working with Ramsey County as civil legal counsel to the county board and as the director of risk management, said, "There's a tension when you're trying to draft legal material, because you want the language to be as plain as it can be and understandable. But you also have to make it accurate. Sometimes there's a real tension when you're trying to convey very complex ideas."

The office is also responsible for several publications.

One is the *Minnesota Revisor's Manual with Styles and Forms*, a detailed guide for drafting legislation and giving an understanding of writing; *Laws of Minnesota* contains the laws and resolutions passed each legislative session; *Minnesota Statutes* contains the codified general and permanent laws; and *Minnesota Rules* contains the compiled administrative rules adopted by state agencies. 

How a Bill Becomes

Idea

1 A bill is an idea for a new law or an idea to change an old law. Anyone can suggest an idea for a bill — an individual, consumer group, professional association, government agency, or the governor. Most often, however, ideas come from legislators, the only ones who can begin to move an idea through the process. There are 134 House members and 67 senators.

Legal form

2 The Office of the Revisor of Statutes and staff from other legislative offices work with legislators in putting the idea for a new law into proper legal form. The revisor's office is responsible for assuring that the proposal's form complies with the rules of both bodies before the bill can be introduced into the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate.

Authors

3 Each bill must have a legislator to sponsor and introduce it in the Legislature. That legislator is the chief author whose name appears on the bill along with the bill's file number to identify it as it moves through the legislative process. There may be up to 34 co-authors from the House and four from the Senate. Their names also appear on the bill.

General Register

7 In the House, the General Register serves as a parking lot where bills await action by the full body. Bills chosen to appear on the Calendar for the Day or the Fiscal Calendar are drawn from the General Register.

In the Senate, a different procedure is used. Bills are listed on the General Orders agenda. Senate members, acting as the "committee of the whole," have a chance to debate the issue and offer amendments on the bill. Afterwards, they vote to recommend: passage of the bill, progress (delay action), or further committee action. And sometimes they recommend that a bill not pass. From here, the bill is placed on the Calendar.

Calendar for the Day

8 In the House, the Calendar for the Day is a list of bills the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee has designated for the full House to vote on. Members can vote to amend the bill, and after amendments are dispensed with, the bill is given its *third reading* before the vote of the full body is taken. The House also has a Fiscal Calendar, on which the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee or House Taxes Committee can call up for consideration any tax or finance bill that has had a second reading. The bills are debated, amended, and passed in one day.

In the Senate, bills approved by the "committee of the whole" are placed on the Calendar. At this point, the bill has its *third reading*, after which time the bill cannot be amended unless the entire body agrees to it. Toward the end of the session, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration designates bills from the General Orders calendar to receive priority consideration. These Special Orders bills are debated, amended, and passed in one day.

A bill needs 68 votes to pass the House and 34 votes to pass the Senate. If the House and Senate each pass the same version of the bill, it goes to the governor for a signature.



a Law in Minnesota

Introduction

4 The chief House author of the bill introduces it in the House; the chief Senate author introduces it in the Senate. Identical bills introduced in each body are called *companion* bills. The bill introduction is called the *first reading*. The presiding officer of the House then refers it to an appropriate House committee for discussion; the same thing happens in the Senate.

Committee

5 The bill is discussed in one or more committees depending upon the subject matter. After discussion, committee members recommend action — approval or disapproval — to the full House and full Senate. The House committee then sends a report to the House about its action on the bill; the Senate committee does likewise in the Senate.

Floor

6 After the full House or Senate accepts the committee report, the bill has its *second reading* and is placed on the House agenda called the General Register or the Senate agenda called General Orders. (A committee can recommend that non-controversial bills bypass the General Register or General Orders and go onto the Consent Calendar, where bills usually pass without debate.) After this point, House and Senate procedures differ slightly.

Conference

9 If the House and Senate versions of the bill are different, they go to a conference committee. In the House, the speaker appoints three or five representatives, and in the Senate, the Subcommittee on Committees of the Committee on Rules and Administration selects the same number of senators to form the committee. The committee meets to work out differences in the two bills and to reach a compromise.

Floor

10 The conference committee's compromise bill then goes back to the House and the Senate for another vote. If both bodies pass the bill in this form, it is sent to the governor for his or her approval or disapproval. (If one or both bodies reject the report, it goes back to the conference committee for further consideration.)

Governor

11 Once the governor has the bill, he or she may: sign it, and the bill becomes law; veto it within three days; or allow it to become law by not signing it. During session, the House and Senate can override a governor's veto. This requires a two-thirds vote in the House (90 votes) and Senate (45 votes). The governor also may "line-item veto" parts of a money bill, or "pocket veto" a bill passed during the last three days of the session by not signing it within 14 days after final adjournment. ▼



From beginning to end

Tracking bills is just a mouse click away

Whether you follow a number of bills or just a few, you don't have to physically be at the Capitol to track legislation. Through the Legislature's Web site (www.leg.mn), there are several ways to follow a bill from your computer.

Personalized tracking

The MyBills service allows a user to personalize bill tracking for current legislation, and be notified by e-mail of the bill's movement through the process.

Beginning at the Legislature's main page, click "Bill Search, Status and MyBills." Once on the bill search page look for the "MyBills" tag located along the left sidebar. This will take you to the "MyBills" subscription page. Once there, just follow the instructions, which include establishing a username and password. Once that is established you can:

- Receive an RSS feed of bills in your account;
- Add House and Senate bills to your list by bill number, subject or author;
- View the legislative status of your bills, with items with significant current action highlighted;
- Modify your list at any time; and
- Receive daily updates.

Bills, bills and more bills

Information about any bill that has been introduced since 1993 is accessible through the Web.

Begin at www.leg.mn and click on "Bill Search, Status and MyBills." This will take you to a page where you can enter a House or Senate file number, which is used to identify a bill in the House or Senate, the name of the chief sponsor in either body, a committee of origin topic, or a keyword description.

Once the search criteria is entered, the "bill status summary" page gives a short version of what the bill is about, and provides links to the status, full text or summary of a bill from the nonpartisan House Research Department. The status area shows the process of a bill from

its introduction, through the committee and floor process to gubernatorial action.

Tools to help with your search

You don't have to know a bill's number or even the chief sponsor to find information on legislation you are interested in.

There are several features on the Legislature's Web site to help you determine a bill's number and sponsors in both the House and Senate.

On the main bill tracking search page, there is a section at the top for House and Senate bills. Choose either link and you will be directed to an Internet form providing a number of options.

Information by phone

For those who do not have access to a computer, bill information is just a phone call away. Contact the House Index Department at (651) 296-6646. Also, if you're looking for information on the Internet, and you're not sure where to find it, contact House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

deals with several topics, and the topic you are interested in will be a part of another larger bill.

- **House Author Search:** this option allows you to see all the bills a particular member has sponsored. It is handy when you know a certain representative has sponsored a bill, but you're not sure of its number or status.
- **House Committee Search:** sometimes all you might know about a bill is that a particular House committee is hearing the bill. This search option allows you to see all the bills

Through the MyBills Web page on the Legislature's Web site you can personalize bill tracking

If you are unsure about the best way to proceed, click the Help button and be directed to the Examples and Explanations page. The page features an explanation of how to search for bills that have been passed or are still in the legislative process.

Near the top of the main bill status page are four links to four different searches.

- **House Topic Search:** this search allows you to find bills according to the major topic area that it falls into. In some cases, a bill

initially referred to a committee.

- **House Action Search:** this link offers dozens of possible status actions for bills in the House. This may also be handy if you are trying to determine whether a committee has reported on a certain bill or if you think a bill was acted upon on a certain day, but you're not sure of any other information.

One on one

Art teacher looks to paint good picture for constituents

By MIA SIMPSON

Rep. Robin Brown (DFL-Austin) said she knocked on approximately 9,000 doors during her campaign for a simple reason: She wanted



Rep. Robin Brown

to get to know voters one-on-one.

"When I talk about knowing the district, I mean that I know the stories of my district," she said. "I know what they want, and it's basically what everyone

wants: to have a good job and be able to raise a family and to live in a safe community."

Up until recently, Brown had never considered an election run. Her husband, Joe, served as a state representative in Iowa, their home state, in the 1980s before they married, which made politics common conversation,

but not necessarily a quest for her. Brown credits several factors – grown children, shifting national politics and a passion for education – as the impetus to her decision to run for a seat in the House.

"I still haven't gotten it down to a 30-second sound-bite," she said. "I just thought, 'You know, I can do that.'"

One of seven children in a farming family, Brown spent her childhood riding horses before entering Minnesota State University, Mankato to major in art education. After working nine years as a teacher, she enrolled in a master's degree program in education at St. Mary's University, where she graduated last year.

For the last five years, Brown has taught art and photography at Albert Lea High School. She's also an artist herself. The artwork – paintings of horses in vibrant tones of blue, black and red – around her sparsely-decorated

DISTRICT 27A

2002 population: 36,705
Largest city: Albert Lea
Counties: Freeborn, Mower
Top concern: Education

office is hers. Brown appears introverted, quiet and thoughtful — though she professes that she experienced a metamorphosis of sorts while campaigning.

"I learned that I am much stronger than I thought I was," she said. "I don't have to be the shy, quiet person I always was. ... There's not much to be afraid of."

Brown said she'll focus on education this session, as well as other issues relevant to her district, including agriculture and taxes. She'll also hold fast to advice her husband gave her as she took her oath to office. "He said, 'Take care of your constituents,'" she said. "I want to represent them in a way that makes them proud."

Continuing on her path

Brynaert moves from school board to statehouse

By SONJA HEGMAN

The day Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato) walked her daughter to a school playground in Mankato is the day she started her path of public service.



Rep. Kathy Brynaert

Noticing a large number of children and just one supervisor, Brynaert decided she'd organize a playground program and include nine games the children could play. From there,

Brynaert served on the Mankato School Board for 11 years and helped start several youth programs, including a health organization aimed at preventing teen pregnancy.

Her decision to run for state representative came after a lot of nudging from family, friends and Rep. John Dorn, who represented the area for 20 years before choosing not

to seek re-election. Instead, he served as Brynaert's campaign co-chair.

She worried about campaigning because it was a bit too "egocentric" for her. She had served only in nonpartisan roles and never had to pose for pictures or be in the limelight.

"I believe in democracy," she said. "I'm always talking to students and saying they need to step up to the plate. I can't talk to young people about courage and not have courage myself."

Originally from Detroit, Brynaert calls herself a "city kid" who was not ready for Mankato. She and her husband, Tony Filipovitch, arrived there from Tulsa, Okla. in 1978 when Filipovitch, a Chicago native, was offered a job teaching in the Urban Studies program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

"Our first day there we walked around the downtown, twice," she said. "We looked at each other and said, 'In two years we're outta here.'"

DISTRICT 23B

2002 population: 36,492
Largest city: Mankato
Counties: Blue Earth, Nicollet
Top concern: Education funding

Though the job of representative is new for her, Brynaert said the most difficult part of the job will be living alone because she is renting an apartment for the session and her husband will not be joining her here.

"I've never lived alone in my life," she said, nonchalantly mentioning she was a nun in a convent for a couple of years in her early 20s.

After attending classes at the College of St. Teresa, in Winona, for a year, Brynaert decided to join the Franciscan convent in Rochester affiliated with the college as a way to come to terms with issues she was facing in her life. Brynaert left the convent because she "matured through her issues" and returned to the college where she received her bachelor's degree in philosophy.

Serving in a new role

Former coach wants to continue helping community

By CRAIG GREEN

For as long as he can remember, service has always been important to Rep. Bob Dettmer (R-Forest Lake).



Rep. Bob Dettmer

After graduating from Bemidji State University in 1973, Dettmer took his first teaching job at Forest Lake Area High School, and it's where he has taught for the last 34 years. In addition to teaching outdoor education and weight training, Dettmer has coached track and soccer. He also became a state-ranked wrestling coach, leading his teams to more than 350 wins.

As a chief warrant officer in the U.S. Army Reserves, Dettmer was called to active duty shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks, first serving at Fort Gordon in Georgia, and later Kuwait and Iraq.

This was Dettmer's first run for public office, and he won his district with 55 percent of the vote. He replaces former Rep. Ray Vandever, who won a seat in the Minnesota Senate.

Representing a district that supports conservative values, Dettmer is pro-life and wants to work on "keeping a lid on taxes." He knows that his opinions may meet resistance. "As a conservative, I know there are issues that I will have to deal with which I may not agree," said Dettmer. "But my values, my foundation, will help me deal with these issues."

Dettmer and his wife, Colleen, have three children. Their sons, Travis and Robb, are both West Point graduates and officers in the armed forces. On his second tour in Iraq, Travis leads a company of 250 soldiers in Baghdad, while Robb is a captain with the Texas National Guard. Dettmer's daughter, Krystle, attends Bethel University and is

| DISTRICT 52A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,767 Largest city: Forest Lake Counties: Anoka, Washington Top concerns: Education funding, property taxes |

hoping to go into education.

During this year's session, Dettmer wants to focus on education funding, property taxes and affordable health care. He serves on the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance and K-12 Finance divisions of the House Finance Committee, the House E-12 Education Committee and Veterans Affairs Division of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

"I was a servant as a teacher at school, and a servant in the military," said Dettmer. "The call to come to St. Paul is also a tremendous service I look forward to."

Pillar of the community

Dominguez looks improve Minneapolis' north side

By NICK BUSSE

For a guy who's lived his entire life in north Minneapolis, Rep. Augustine "Willie" Dominguez (DFL-Mpls) has gotten around.



Rep. Augustine "Willie" Dominguez

Dominguez, who fills the seat vacated by new U.S. Congressman Keith Ellison, has spent more than 25 years working with community-based organizations and nonprofit groups, helping them develop what he calls "core areas" such as financing and fundraising.

Among the numerous affiliations on his resume: Centro Cultural Chicano, the Minneapolis Empowerment Zone program, the Civilian Police Review Authority and the Latino Advisory Committee to the Mayor and City Council.

"I've been involved in the community

practically all my life," said Dominguez, who can even be heard spinning Tex-Mex music on his own Saturday-morning radio show on the community-oriented KFAI, where he has also served on the board of directors.

Born and raised on the city's north side, Dominguez, the 18th child in a family of 19, said he watched his hometown take a turn for the worse.

"When I was growing up, we didn't have the issues that we have now. ... We didn't have the crime as high as it is now, and the educational system was good," he said.

Dominguez said that what was once a vibrant community marked by thriving businesses and street parades has now fallen into disrepair, plagued by gang violence and unemployment. As a state representative, he hopes to help breathe new life into it by rolling back cuts to local government aid and by fostering intervention/prevention programs, especially for youth.

"Those are good programs for youth to be involved with," Dominguez said, adding that

| DISTRICT 58B |
|---|
| Population: 36,478 Largest city: Minneapolis County: Hennepin Top concerns: Crime, education, employment |

some such programs have been "deleted" in recent years.

Dominguez said he also seeks to improve the local education system and increase opportunities for livable-wage employment.

"The opportunities that are there are pretty much washing away. The money-making mechanisms are not there anymore. That's what needs to take place in our community."

Despite all its problems, Dominguez takes great pride in his district (which also includes parts of downtown Minneapolis), and is optimistic about its future.

"North side is beautiful, believe me," he said. "There are many good things going on, but it's like a seed. You need to grow it."

Not ready to relax

Doty spurns retirement, again, to represent district

By MIA SIMPSON

Rep. Al Doty (DFL-Royalton) is supposed to be retired.



Rep. Al Doty

He taught history for 31 years at Pierz High School and worked there as a wrestling coach and technology coordinator. He left those positions, technically entering retirement, in 1999.

It didn't stick.

Two years later he was hired as senior advocate at Horizon Health Inc. which provides living options for senior citizens, where he served clients in Morrison and Crow Wing counties. It was there he received his latest call to duty.

"Gradually over the six years, it became apparent that the problems that I came to fix came from legislative decisions," he said. "And the more you get to know politics, the more

you realize these things can be fixed."

He unsuccessfully ran as an Independence Party candidate in 2004. Two years later, he was approached by the DFL and asked to run under its banner.

"I told them, 'I'm not doing a primary,' and I asked whether I had to change anything I'd said the last time," he said. He got the answers he wanted.

Doty said he feels in touch with the party platform, and he believes many problems must be addressed this biennium.

"There isn't one issue this time," he said. "You don't get a turnover like this on one issue. There are a lot of things that are out of control."

He recalls stories during his time with Horizon Health, when elderly women would speak through tears about the situations they were facing due to health care costs, rising property taxes and other local issues.

DISTRICT 12B

2002 population: 36,677

Largest city: Little Falls

Counties: Crow Wing, Morrison

Top concerns: health care costs, property taxes

"They are just strapped," he said. "They are completely out of options and have nowhere to go. That was really one of the reasons I decided to run. It wasn't one grandma; it was a group of them."

Doty is pleased with his committee assignments: the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee and its Veterans Affairs Division; and the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs, Environment and Natural Resources and the Transportation finance divisions of the House Finance Committee.

"I really believe I can make a difference in my district," he said.

Designing new solutions

Kalin tries to keep the big picture in mind

By PATTY OSTBERG

At the end of each day Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-Lindstrom) makes a list of adversaries and proponents he needs to call to get to the bottom of legislative issues.



Rep. Jeremy Kalin

important to see all sides of the equation.

Kalin uses the state's transportation funding needs to explain his philosophy.

Roads need to be fixed, but the state doesn't have the money to do so. "We have an obligation to come up with possible alternatives," he said. Raising the gas tax could be a possibility, but coming up with several

solutions may be a better approach.

Defeating a two-term incumbent by 1.1 percent of the vote, he attributes the victory to listening, while door knocking, to constituents, working to maintain a positive attitude when discussing hot-button issues and his past coalition-building experience.

For example, in the mid-1990s, when a major utility company was going to build a power line about 20 miles long through the heart of his county, Kalin said he helped organize a citizens group to stop the implementation from taking place.

Kalin said the state needs to put more money into transportation projects. He would like to see an examination of more buses or providing rail service without dramatically changing the area's landscape or character. This issue is especially important because many of his constituents deal with congested roadways while commuting back and forth to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Most of his

DISTRICT 17B

2002 population: 36,732

Largest city: North Branch

County: Chisago

Top concern: Minnesota's infrastructure

district is a 30- to 45-minute drive from the Capitol.

Other top issues for Kalin include: the local job market, property tax relief and better accountability through testing in schools.

In addition to serving on the Transportation Finance Division and Energy Finance and Policy Division of the House Finance Committee, Kalin serves on the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee and is vice chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

He vows to put "people before politics," and has an open-door policy. "I really want every constituent in Chisago County to feel like they can just walk right in ... and bend my ear."

Tuesday, January 16

HF110-Huntley (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact enacted.

HF111-Loeffler (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Preventive health care promoted by requiring high deductible health plans used with a health savings account to cover preventive care with no deductible as permitted by federal law.

HF112-Lillie (DFL)
Finance
School district ice arena levy authority increased.

HF113-Thao (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Interstate 35E in St. Paul speed limit raised to 55 mph.

HF114-Solberg (DFL)
Taxes
Public safety radio communication products and services exempted from sales tax.

HF115-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Independent School District No. 2853, Lac qui Parle Valley, severance levy authorized.

HF116-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Customer sales and service call center requirements imposed.

HF117-Thissen (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Personal jurisdiction over foreign corporations and non-resident individuals modified.

HF118-Fritz (DFL)
Finance
Faribault; Paradise Center for the Arts grant provided to provide handicapped accessibility and money appropriated.

HF119-Jaros (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
St. Louis County; South St. Louis Municipality feasibility commission established.

HF120-Mariani (DFL)
Finance
Group residential housing rates modified.

HF121-Emmer (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Citizenship proof required to file for

specified offices, voters required to provide picture identification, identification cards issued at no charge and unverified ballots procedure established.

HF122-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
American flag sales regulated.

HF123-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Education expense tax credit and deduction applied to certain expenditures for pre-kindergarten expenses and museum memberships.

HF124-Norton (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Biotechnology and medical genomics research funding provided to research partnership between the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Foundation, and money appropriated.

HF125-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Disability definitions provided for police and fire fund and local government correctional retirement plan members and disability and survivor benefits modified.

HF126-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public pension plan appeal procedures modified.

HF127-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public employee disability benefits eligibility procedures modified.

HF128-Pelowski (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Non-resident archery deer license fee modified.

HF129-Thissen (DFL)
Finance
Community partnership school grant-in-aid assistance program established and money appropriated.

HF130-Lanning (R)
Taxes
Border city enterprise zone allocations increased.

HF131-Hilstrom (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Social Security number use restricted.

HF132-Mahoney (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Minnesota Biomedical Sciences Research Facilities Authority and funding program established, University of Minnesota authorized to apply for funds, bonds issued, reports required and money appropriated.

HF133-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Sexual harassment claims statute of limitations suspended while employer investigations are pending.

HF134-Jaros (DFL)
Taxes
Duluth food and beverage sales tax increase authorized, and proceeds allocated to renovations and a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center.

HF135-Westrom (R)
Taxes
Property tax abatement authority extended to include delinquent taxes.

HF136-Emmer (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Hennepin and Wright counties authorized to initiate a process for the change of county boundaries by resolution.

HF137-Haws (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veteran-owned small businesses designated as targeted group businesses for purposes of awarding state and metro agency procurement contracts.

HF138-Simon (DFL)
Finance
Community education revenue program funding increased.

HF139-Kranz (DFL)
Finance
Early childhood family education, school readiness and Head Start programs funding increased.

HF140-Madore (DFL)
Finance
Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding authorized.

HF141-Haws (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Appropriations continued in effect unless a law is enacted eliminating or amending the appropriation.

HF142-Wardlow (R)
Taxes
Property tax refund household income definition modified to exempt the amount of any military disability pay received by a veteran from the federal government.

HF143-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota River Trail funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF144-Hortman (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Notary public maximum fees increased.

HF145-Hansen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Lake Superior oceangoing vessels ballast water discharge regulation established, rules required to set treatment and management standards and formation of Great Lakes basin coalition required.

HF146-Johnson (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Great River Road historic roadside restoration funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF147-Johnson (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Mississippi River Parkway Commission expiration date extended to 2012.

HF148-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Residential homestead property first tier classification rate valuation limit indexing provided.

HF149-DeLaForest (R)
Taxes
Sales tax reduced to 6 percent.

HF150-DeLaForest (R)
Finance
State agency fee moratorium imposed.

HF151-DeLaForest (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Conservation Reserve Program; Congress memorialized to reauthorize the Conservation Reserve Program as part of the 2007 farm bill.

HF152-Nornes (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Senior citizen resident fishing license provided.

HF153-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

School district shared superintendent aid provided and money appropriated.

HF154-Slocum (DFL)**Finance**

General education basic formula allowance increased.

HF155-Bigham (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Children's health security account and program created, eligibility and covered services specified, task force established and money appropriated.

HF156-Kalin (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Renewable energy standard established.

HF157-Morgan (DFL)**Taxes**

School district levies modified, market value property tax credit computation modified, property tax refunds increased for homeowners and renters, senior deferral eligibility increased, city and county aid increased and money appropriated.

HF158-Urdahl (R)**Taxes**

Livestock farming operations construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF159-Kahn (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Universal health care system working group established, universal coverage plan required, basic health care services rights provided and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF160-Hilty (DFL)**Finance**

Help America Vote Act account appropriations transfer authorized.

HF161-Haws (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

County and regional jail booking fees increased.

HF162-Haws (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Minnesota GI Bill program established to provide post-secondary education assistance to veterans and money appropriated.

HF163-Huntley (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Duluth post-employment benefits accounts authorized to pay benefits to retired employees and to generate revenue dedicated to meet certain city obligations.

HF164-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Finance**

Duluth Entertainment Convention Center arena funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF165-Peppin (R)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance**

State funds prohibited for use in early termination of a contract of any person who reports to the University of Minnesota director of athletics.

HF166-Lesch (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Uniform residential tenant reports provided.

HF167-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Plasma arc technology and biomass or waste materials electricity generating facility pilot project funding provided and money appropriated.

HF168-Thissen (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Influenza immunizations required annually for children in a child care facility.

HF169-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School readiness advisory board established.

HF170-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Early childhood learning preparedness and enrichment allowance program established and class sizes for kindergarten through grade three reduced to meet the statutory state standard.

Wednesday, January 17**HF171-Hackbarth (R)****Finance**

Gasoline tax attributable to the use of all-terrain vehicles percentage modified.

HF172-Nornes (R)**Taxes**

Scambler aggregate tax authorized.

HF173-Erickson (R)**Health & Human Services**

Nursing facilities payment rates in specified counties increased to the geographic group III median rate.

HF174-DeLaForest (R)**Taxes**

Local government purchases sales tax eliminated.

HF175-Erickson (R)**Health & Human Services**

Minnesota Care; aid and attendance benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs excluded from income definition.

HF176-Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Preservation of State Documents Act established.

HF177-Lesch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Fair share health care fund established, large employers required to report health care costs information, payments required and subsidies for approved coverage options required.

HF178-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

Early childhood family education funding increased, minimum population used to calculate revenue increased and home visiting early childhood family education program revenue increased.

HF179-Hackbarth (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

School district question special election petition requirement modified.

HF180-Sertich (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency dissolved, and assets and liabilities transferred to the Hibbing Economic Development Authority.

HF181-Sertich (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislative day references removed from the State Constitution by proposed constitutional amendment.

HF182-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Affordable conversion health coverage provided as a bridge to Medicare for persons 60 to 65 years of age.

HF183-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Medicare Part D limited medical assistance coverage provided.

HF184-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Burglary in the second degree crime definition modified.

HF185-Ward (DFL)**Finance**

Group residential housing supplemental rates modified.

HF186-Erickson (R)**Taxes**

Capital equipment sales tax imposition and refund eliminated.

HF187-Brod (R)**Taxes**

Estate tax federal exemption amount conformity provided.

HF188-Erickson (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Special districts defined, special districts required to file governance documents with the state auditor and audits required.

HF189-DeLaForest (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Scalping of tickets prohibition repealed.

HF190-DeLaForest (R)**E-12 Education**

Teaching license automatic revocation grounds expanded.

Thursday, January 18**HF191-Heidgerken (R)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Anglers allowed to use two lines and two hooks while fishing.

HF192-Urdahl (R)**Health & Human Services**

Meeker County nursing facilities placed in geographic group II.

HF193-DeLaForest (R)**Taxes**

Capital equipment sales tax imposition and refund eliminated.

HF194-Norton (DFL)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Biotechnology and medical genomics research funding provided to research partnership between the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Foundation and money appropriated.

HF195-Paulsen (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Presidential electors designated and proportional representation provided.

HF196-Greiling (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Mental health provisions modified, inmate assessments required, children's mental health grants and training established, crisis intervention team state council created and money appropriated.

HF197-Hackbarth (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Trapping added to the small game and sporting lifetime licenses.

HF198-Hackbarth (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Outdoor walk-in access program established to voluntarily make available privately held land for hunting and fishing.

HF199-Brod (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
State senators staggered terms provided through proposed constitutional amendment.

HF200-Brod (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Voters authorized to vouch for three proof-of-residence oaths on Election Day, election judge training required on the conduct of partisan challengers, partisan challenger training provided and approved voter identification required.

HF201-Brod (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
State primary election moved from September to August.

HF202-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Chemical dependency treatment fund eligibility expanded.

HF203-Mariani (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board legislative membership expanded.

HF204-Mullery (DFL)
E-12 Education
Special Independent School District No. 1, Minneapolis, board member removal authorized.

HF205-Mullery (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Environmental Justice Act established implementing policies and creating a task force and advisory council.

HF206-Hilstrom (DFL)
Taxes
Capital equipment sales tax imposition and refund eliminated.

HF207-Peppin (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Criminal neglect of a vulnerable adult penalties imposed.

HF208-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
School districts authorized to levy for health care costs.

HF209-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board biomass facilities wood product reimbursement grant provided and money appropriated.

HF210-Thao (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Dental licensure provisions modified for applicants from non-accredited programs.

HF211-Zellers (R)
Commerce & Labor
Mortgage application information sale prohibited.

HF212-Liebling (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Foreign medical school graduates authorized to use a credentials verification service.

HF213-Anzelc (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Lakeview Cemetery Association creation and tax levy authorized.

HF214-Solberg (DFL)
Finance
Grand Rapids railroad crossings safety improvements funding provided and money appropriated.

HF215-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
No-fault auto insurance benefit terminations and denials regulated.

HF216-Paulsen (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Initiative and referendum provided, procedures and penalties specified and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF217-Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Disability definition clarified relating to mood-altering chemicals.

HF218-Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health-related licensing boards complaint resolution provisions modified.

HF219-Walker (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy and Finance
Personal sick leave benefits extended to include care for specified relatives.

HF220-Nornes (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service.

HF221-Urdahl (R)
Health & Human Services
Meeker County day training and habilitation provider rate reimbursement increased and proposal required to address the disparity between providers across the state.

HF222-Tillberry (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
University of Minnesota former steam plant employees included in the state health insurance group.

HF223-Thissen (DFL)
Finance
Metropolitan Council transit route required to include service to Richfield in its regular route transit between Edina and Mall of America in Bloomington.

HF224-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Poet laureate appointed and appropriation of gift or grant money specified.

HF225-Walker (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Equality or rights under the law provided for men and women and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF226-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Minerals 21st Century Fund unallotment restored and money appropriated.

HF227-Kahn (DFL)
Rules & Legislative Administration
Legislators per diem compensation payment timing modified and additional travel payments during special sessions authorized.

PENNY WISE



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Tom Barrett, executive director of the Minnesota Gambling Control Board, gives an overview of the board during a Jan. 16 meeting of the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

State of State continued from page 9

- streamlining billing and coding systems; and
- an advancement of efforts to “pay for better health rather than just procedures.”

Energy

Decrying the United States’ “sad addiction to foreign oil,” Pawlenty urged lawmakers to continue the state’s tradition of being a national leader in energy policy by passing a comprehensive renewable energy package this session. He did not lay out specifics of his so-called “Next Generation Energy Plan,” but invited legislators to “add your own ideas” to help reduce global climate change.

Veterans

Pawlenty implored Minnesotans to support members of the Minnesota National Guard and other U.S. troops serving overseas in every way possible. He resurrected a proposed legislative package from 2006 that would exempt military pensions from the state’s income tax, create a “Minnesota GI bill” for college expenses, and increase funding for veterans’ programs. In addition, he urged full funding of the National Guard’s budget requests.

Reaction

Democrats were cautious in their reactions to the governor’s speech, but expressed disappointment in some of the specifics of his proposals.

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) said he wanted to see the governor’s full budget proposal before criticizing any of



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich offers his reaction to the media after the governor’s State of the State address Jan. 17.

his initiatives.

“We look forward to all the details, because the devil’s really in the details of all of this. So when his budget comes out next week, we’ll be doing our work, making sure where all the money is being spent,” Sertich said.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) also said he wanted to see more details, but said Pawlenty’s speech was a “great, positive response” to the state’s issues.

“What a great message for everybody,” Seifert said. “I just was disappointed we had a lot of cold-stone reaction from the DFL, but hopefully we’ll be able to cooperate on some of these ideas.”

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) said she takes issue with Pawlenty’s notion of pay-for-performance initiatives in education. She said one of the most successful states in terms of increasing students’ performances has been Florida under the administration of former Gov. Jeb Bush, who Kahn said did “exactly the opposite” of what Pawlenty is proposing.

“They [Florida] isolated the schools that were having problems, and instead of penalizing them — which is kind of what pay-for-performance sends the message that you’re going to do — they actually gave them extra help.” 🙏

Bonding continued from page 12

According to this year’s Bonds Proceeds Cancellation Report, \$9.3 million in bonding projects have been cancelled from 1996 to 2001 including \$347,385 for a Faribault prison tunnel project that was part of a \$7.5 million appropriation in 2000.

The appropriation was cancelled because the initial amount was more than what was needed once repairs and reshaping to the tunnel were made, said Kath Ouska, assistant director of project management and predesign in the State Architect’s Office.

If a project is cancelled, or an organization cannot come up with matching funds required for project approval, the bonds are not sold by the Finance Department. 🙏

Bonding for the public good

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, there are two ways the state pays for projects through bonding. General obligation bonds are backed by the full faith, credit and taxing powers of the state; revenue bonds are backed by revenues other than a statewide tax.

General obligation bonds

Constitutionally, general obligation bonds must be used for a public purpose to achieve a legitimate public goal or benefit, even if it may result in nonpublic interests. They are usually used to make improvements to public lands and buildings, but can also be used to establish and

maintain highways; to construct, improve and operate airports and other air navigational facilities; and to improve or rehabilitate public or private railroad right-of-way and other rail facilities.

Revenue bonds

Revenue bonds must also be used for public purpose, but can also be issued by certain state agencies. Examples include the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency issuing mortgage revenue bonds, or the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority issuing bonds to finance municipal wastewater treatment and infrastructure projects.

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

State government

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Average reduction, as percent, in overall funding for administrative state agencies in 2006-07 biennium..... | 9 |
| Additional revenue for the biennium, in millions, generated by additional investments in tax compliance activities | \$90.7 |
| Percent below the national average in Minnesota's expenditures per capita for governmental administration | 15 |
| Estimated percent of state employees that will be at least 60 years old in 2015 | 50 |
| Median age of a state employee in 2000 | 45 |
| Median age in 1984 | 38 |
| State rank in number of state government employees per 10,000 residents | 33 |
| State cost of human resources service per employee in 2005 | \$768 |
| State/local government median | \$912 |
| State rank in a 2006 study of the most digitally advanced state governments | 11 |
| Rank in 2004 | 17 |
| Estimated percent savings to state cell phone contracts that have been renegotiated since July 1, 2006 | 20 |
| Approximate number of vehicles in the state fleet | 8,000 |
| Facilities, as approximate, used for vehicle or equipment maintenance and/or storage | 130 |
| Estimated buildings owned by the state | 5,000 |
| Number of "custodial" agencies that manage these buildings | 22 |
| Millions of business and professional licensing transactions estimated to be handled each year by more than 40 state agencies using more than 60 licensing systems | 1 |
| Percent of Minnesotans that favor obtaining licenses online | 85 |
| Percent of licensing transactions available online | 18 |
| Billions of dollars of incoming grant funds that the state currently pursues, distributes and manages | 1 |
| Number of grants issued | 11,600 |
| Amount saved by Department of Transportation on laptop and personal computer purchases in 2006 using a new information technology standards contract | \$169,000 |
| Truckloads of road salt that could be purchased with that money | 362 |

Sources: Annual Report to the Governor, The State of Minnesota's Drive to Excellence, Jan. 2, 2007; An Overview of State Government Spending, Department of Finance, November 2006.

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SESSION WEEKLY

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HF228- HF366

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: From left: Reps. Erik Paulsen, Dean Simpson, Kurt Zellers, Joe Mullery, Paul Marquart, Denise Dittrich, Diane Loeffler and Lyle Koenen listen to a presentation of the property tax portion of the governor's budget proposal during a Jan. 24 joint hearing of the House Taxes Committee and its Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

A bigger budget

Pawlenty calls for a \$3 billion spending increase — but no new taxes



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Gov. Tim Pawlenty released his proposed budget at the Department of Revenue Jan. 22.

By Nick Busse

[Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) unveiled his [budget proposal](#) Jan. 22, calling for a record \$34.4 billion in state spending over the next two years — a nearly \$3 billion increase, with the bulk of the new money going to education, health care and tax relief.

Pawlenty's proposal would take advantage of a projected \$2.2 billion budget surplus to beef up spending without raising taxes. In addition, the governor said his budget would emphasize pay-for-performance initiatives in key areas, especially education.

"Minnesota should stop paying for good intentions and start paying for better performance," Pawlenty said. "We want to measure the results; we want to measure not just how much we're spending, but what are we getting for it."

In brief, Pawlenty's plan would provide an extra \$714 million for K-12 education, \$414 million for higher education, \$281 million for tax relief, \$274 million for health care reforms, \$213 million for new investments in technology, and \$40 million for the governor's "Next Generation Energy Plan," which focuses on renewable energy sources.

Also included is a \$75 million veterans and military package that would exempt military pay and pensions from the state income tax, and also provide new education benefits and funding for veterans' programs.

Cautious reaction

Reaction to the governor's recommendations by the new DFL majority in the House has been cautious for the most part, with [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) praising his proposals as "a good starting point," but also making it clear that Democrats disagree with the governor on a number of key issues.

"We were disappointed that there's no plan to implement an all-day, every day kindergarten. ... There's no plan in this budget for covering all Minnesota children with health care, nor is there really leadership on the transportation issue," Kelliher said.

House Republicans, meanwhile, offered their own critical take on Pawlenty's budget proposals. [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) called for more tax relief and less spending, asking the governor to "put the taxpayer first."

What follows are select highlights of the governor's Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget recommendations and policy initiatives, along with some responses from House leadership and committee chairs.

K-12 education

In the K-12 arena, Pawlenty's budget recommendations focus on pay-for-performance incentives. In addition to a one-time, 2 percent per year basic revenue increase for all schools, the governor's "Successful Schools" initiative would give an extra 2 percent per year to schools that achieve a three-star rating or better in reading or math on their state school report cards.

Other initiatives include expanded funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, expansion of the Q-Comp performance pay for educators program, and \$75 million for the governor's "3R" (rigor, relevance and results) high schools program, in which participating schools would agree to provide students access to college-level courses and work internships.

DFL leaders expressed skepticism about the governor's overall approach to education funding.

First Reading continued on page 4

“What I heard in the governor’s State of the State speech last week was a commitment to put more money into education and into funding our classrooms,” said [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm). “So far, what I’ve seen in [the governor’s budget], the numbers don’t add up to what he said last week.”

Early childhood

For early childhood education, Pawlenty proposes a \$28.9 million scholarship program to provide “at-risk” pre-kindergarteners the opportunity to attend approved early childhood programs, as well as an additional \$9 million to help improve early childhood education quality.

Higher education

The governor’s budget adds \$153 million in new funding for the University of Minnesota, primarily for research purposes. Funding for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System could increase by \$123 million. In addition, both the university and MnSCU could be eligible for an additional \$25 million each, providing that they achieve certain “performance measurements.”

Pawlenty’s proposed budget would also create two new financial aid programs: the so-called “Minnesota GI Bill,” which would provide up to \$2,000 per year in postsecondary education benefits to eligible veterans and their dependents; and ACHIEVE II, which would grant scholarships to certain high school students who take rigorous courses.

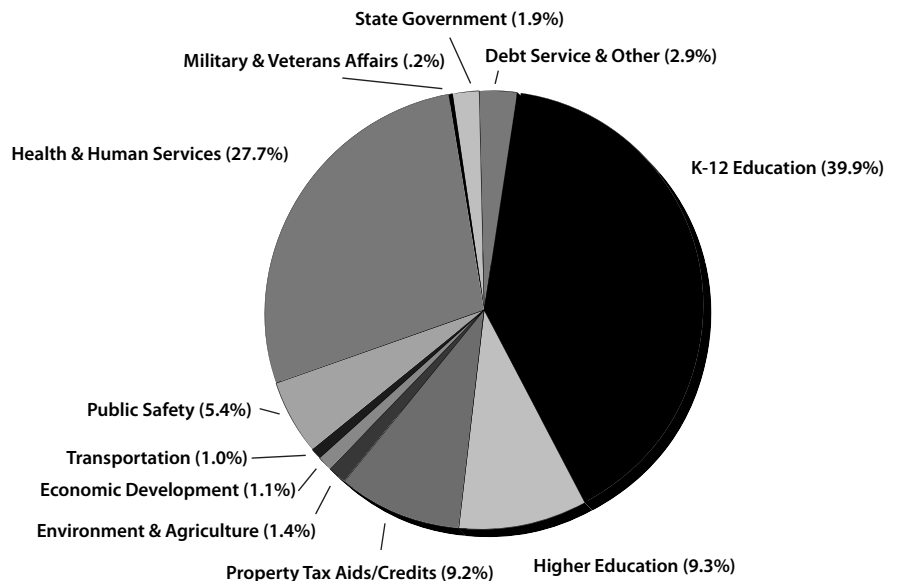
[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), chairman of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee, said he is pleased that the governor is proposing new money for higher education, but warned that “whether or not that money ends up in this budget where the governor proposed, it is a different story altogether.” He added that he would like to see more money set aside for keeping down tuition rates.

Taxes

Property tax relief, one of the main issues in last year’s election, is addressed in the governor’s budget recommendations with a \$150 million package that would grant homestead market value credits, increase local government aid and the state’s share of public school operating levies, and distribute property tax refunds.

The local government aid portion of the package is likely to become a point of contention between Republicans and

FY 2008-09 General Fund Budget Spending by Area



Source: Department of Finance

Democrats. Pawlenty proposes a property tax cap on cities and counties that receive more than a third of their total general fund revenues from the state; also, for cities with populations greater than 100,000, he proposes that any new local government aid money be used for public safety purposes.

“We’ve heard the concern about public safety being such a priority, and they always entangle the [local government assistance] debate with, ‘Well, we can’t do what we want to do in public safety because we’re not getting more LGA money,’” Pawlenty said. “Well, now we’re giving them LGA money, and we’re challenging them to put it where they said it was most important.”

Although she stopped short of discussing the individual provisions of the governor’s budget, Kelliher said that House Democrats “certainly will have some other ways to put together a property tax package for Minnesotans.”

[Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee,

also indicated that her committee would carefully scrutinize the governor’s proposal.

Other tax cuts recommended in Pawlenty’s budget include targeted income tax relief for veterans, educators, college students and those without access to employer-provided health insurance; as well as targeted business tax exemptions designed to increase job growth in the state.

Health and human services

Noting that the state’s health and human services spending is set to increase by more than \$1 billion this biennium “on autopilot,” Pawlenty urged lawmakers to “get some reasonable control” over that portion of the budget.

“The appetite and growth in this area is going to have severe implications for the state 10 or 15 years out if we don’t get some better control over it,” Pawlenty said.

Nevertheless, the governor’s recommendations include a number of new initiatives, encompassing such diverse issues as health care access, flu pandemic preparedness, mental health and the implementation of electronic medical record systems.

One of the governor’s key recommendations — a proposal to modernize and expand MinnesotaCare and extend health coverage to 13,000 additional children in the state — is already drawing criticism from House Democrats. [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#)

This article highlights only a few key items of Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2008-09. A full summary, as well as a press release and PowerPoint presentation, can be found on the Minnesota Department of Finance Web site at <http://www.finance.state.mn.us>. Streaming video of the governor’s press conference and the responses by DFL legislative leaders and Republican Senate leaders can be found through the Minnesota Senate Web site at <http://www.senate.mn>.

Budget continued on page 22

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Jan. 18-25 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

BUDGET

Alternative budgeting

Minnesotans are willing to pay about \$16.50 for every \$100 in their pocket for state and local government spending. This amount has not varied much over time.

"Call it a citizen's fiscal thermostat on the price of government," Peter Hutchinson, former finance commissioner and gubernatorial candidate, told the House Ways and Means Committee on Jan. 22. If the price of government goes too far above that mark, people start demanding cuts, he said. If it goes too low, Minnesotans look for more government spending.

For example, in 2000 the so-called "set point" was \$17, and "we were actively looking for ways to reduce the price of government," he said. Then the "set point" dropped to \$15.40, before rising to \$16.50 in 2006 due to increased fees, tuition and property taxes. Hutchinson said that Minnesota might be the only state to track the price of government from the perspective of "set point." A report is available at: www.budget.state.mn.us/budget/summary/pog/070109_pog.pdf.

Hutchinson challenged legislators to view budgeting by taking into consideration the "set point," and all taxpayer revenue the state receives, including federal money, before defining how best to leverage the funds to produce better results.

He said the current budgeting challenge is the reality that the rising cost of health care to government affects its ability to increase funding on other priorities. His research shows that while the price of government has stayed stable, the cost of health care has tripled.

The projected \$2.2 billion surplus puts lawmakers in a unique position to make policy decisions that could have a long-term effect on the state, Hutchinson said.

He reminded legislators that the surplus is one-time money, and should be used to create an asset that will deliver over time, he said. His suggestions include paying down outstanding highway debt, changing our health care system so it costs less later and

creating endowments for scholarships to help bring down the cost of higher education.

BUSINESS

Small pharm, big issues

Laws and regulations aimed at corralling big pharmaceutical companies could hurt smaller ones, representatives of a local biopharmaceutical company told a House committee.

Ray Frost, director of government relations for MGI Pharma, a Minnesota-based biopharmaceutical business, said that because of negative perceptions of the pharmaceutical industry as a whole, recent state and federal legislation has hurt smaller pharmaceutical companies that tend to focus on treatments for less common, less profitable diseases.

"Republicans and Democrats — it's not a partisan issue — have come across many policy initiatives in recent years ... many of which have been hurtful or have had adverse effects more to the smaller companies," Frost told members of the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee, which took no action.

Testifying Jan. 23, Frost mentioned additional regulations on clinical trials, legislation restricting sales and marketing techniques. He proposed anti-DTC (direct-

Committees take to the road

The House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for setting spending targets in the House, is scheduled to hold a meeting in Isanti, Jan. 29, at 7:30 p.m. at Spectacular Celebrations, 1001 County Road 5 NE.

A joint meeting of the House E-12 Education Committee and the K-12 Division of the House Finance Committee is scheduled for 7 p.m., Jan. 30, at the Glover-Suddeth Center, 2100 Plymouth Ave. N., Minneapolis.

to-consumer) drug advertising legislation as three examples of policy initiatives that are hurtful to small pharmaceutical companies.

David Melin, MGI Pharma's senior director for corporate and government affairs, said small pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies face inherent challenges in terms of achieving profitability. MGI Pharma started in 1979 as a "spin off" of research begun at the University of Minnesota, is only now "on the cusp" of becoming a profitable company after 27 years of research and development, he said.

According to Melin, the company has successfully developed and marketed a number of drugs that treat conditions peripheral to cancer, but it has not yet become profitable because its products are oriented towards small groups of patients.

"The drugs that we're developing — many

SPREADING THE WORD

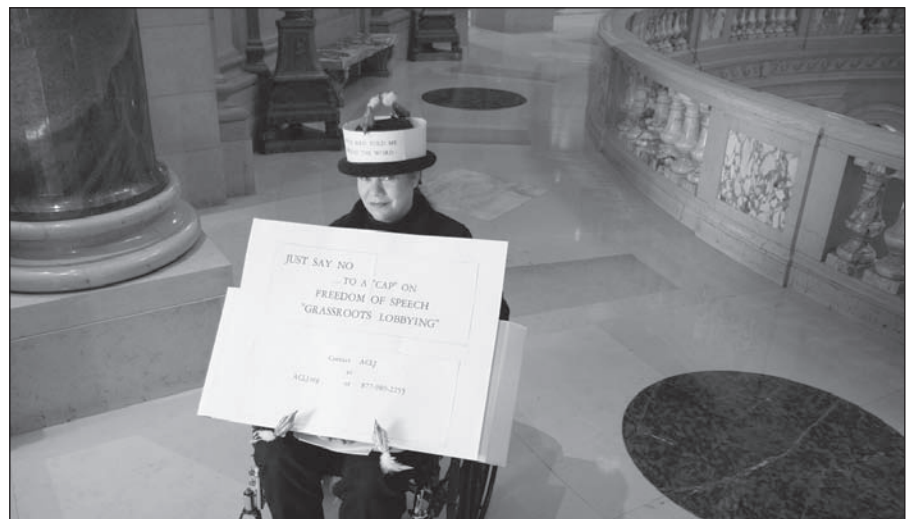


PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Susan Noll of St. Paul works independently in the Capitol Rotunda to "spread the word" locally about two bills that are currently before Congress. The bills, designed to expand lobbying regulation, would affect groups and individuals that encourage the public involvement by classifying them as "grassroots lobbying firms." The new classification would require individuals to register as lobbyists, and they would be subject to penalties for not complying with requirements.

of them are orphan drugs, smaller disease states — but they have an impact on patient lives, and that's really what our focus is," Melin said.

Among the laws that Frost said hinder his business: a recently enacted Minnesota statute that forbids drug companies from spending more than \$49.99 per year to pay for meals or other accommodations for a given doctor, nurse or other health care practitioner.

CRIME

Preparing for release

Statistics show that most crimes are committed by people who have previously spent time in jail.

The best safeguard against this is a re-entry and supervised release system, said [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

At a Jan. 23 hearing, Gary Johnson, director of re-entry services for the [Department of Corrections](#), said that efforts to prepare prisoners for re-entry into the outside world begin as soon as they arrive at the state facilities. Along with orientation, several services are provided, including helping obtain personal identification, resolving outstanding warrants and handling child support issues.

This "continuum of support" may even continue once they have left correctional supervision, he said.

Timothy Lanz, re-entry program manager, said the department also addresses alcohol and drug abuse, and medical conditions. Ninety percent of those who enter the prison system have alcohol and/or drug abuse problems. That is where the problem lies.

"The reality is we have finite resources within the department. We try to prioritize treatment and deliver it to as many as we can," Lanz said.

"I find it ironic that the government has treated these addictions as criminal justice issues. Yet when we get these people in the criminal justice system, we start to define the addiction as more of a health issue," said [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover).

Working together with [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the Public Safety Division of the House Finance Committee, Mullery said he is committed to finding solutions. The committee took no action.

Craig Vos, program manager for Hennepin County Community Corrections, said that on a given day, the county provides services to more than 40,000 clients, 85 percent of which are adults. Because of the size of county, they

also have several specialized units, including domestic assault, sex offender and juvenile supervision.

Sentence fits the crime

An underlying goal to an offender's sentence is to ensure that no Minnesotan will again be victimized by the felon.

"All sentencing in Minnesota is supposed to protect public safety," Isabel Gomez told the Public Safety Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23. The committee took no action.

Gomez, executive director of the Minnesota [Sentencing Guidelines Commission](#), said that since 1980 the commission has maintained a database that keeps track of every element of every felony conviction in the state. This bank of information allows courts to determine an appropriate sentence for an offender based on two factors: the offender's criminal background and the seriousness of the crime.

In addition to being a "gold mine" of material, Gomez said that governments throughout the world want to examine and learn how they can implement a similar system. Additionally, she said the system and the data are invaluable tools for Minnesota to analyze how to spend its resources.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) pointed out that state funding has decreased for county jails, where many short-term felons are housed, while the cost of running the jails continues to rise. "I think it's a wonderful program that relieves the state of a burden," Haws said. "I just think that the state ought to pay better than \$9 on a \$60 bill. Or at least say 'Thank you.'"

[Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) spoke about the continuing need for adequate funding for public safety projects.

He said that members, while thinking about comprehensive health care coverage, don't show much concern about the cost. However, when it comes to prisons, where there are also health care concerns, cost becomes a factor.

EDUCATION

More math needed

American children are falling behind their counterparts around the world — not in a foot race, but in a race for math and science proficiency.

Science, math and technology were the focus of a presentation before the Jan. 18 House E-12 Education Committee.

The committee took no action, but members

said it was good background information.

"By 2010, 90 percent of engineers and scientists in the world will be living in Asia," said Bill Linder, executive director of the ADC Foundation

Asian countries are closing the technology gap and children there have a different focus than American children. "In China, Bill Gates is Britney Spears; in America, Britney Spears is Britney Spears," he said.

A student's high school education in the areas of science, math and technology engineering is more predictive of success than family income or race, he said, adding that the strongest predictor of college completion is the highest level of math completed in high school.

Nancy Nutting, executive director of SciMathMN added that completing math beyond advanced algebra more than doubles the chance that a student entering college will complete a degree. SciMathMN is a non-profit organization that collaborates with K-12 education, higher education and business partners.

She also said that a Michigan State University study found that 51 percent of eighth-graders could not solve a normal fraction problem.

Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan), a retired math teacher, said that his students had to grab a calculator to figure out how much 16×12 is.

"I've been toying with the idea of writing legislation of banning calculators in the



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Arthur Reynolds, a professor at the University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development, and Darlyne Bailey, dean of the university's College of Education and Human Development, testify at the Jan. 18 meeting of the Early Childhood Learning Division of the House Finance Committee.

classroom until the sixth grade,” he said, while acknowledging that it probably would never pass.

“Calculators should be a tool, not a substitute for learning, I hope you don’t write that legislation,” Nutting said.

Minnesota’s Promise

More than two dozen past and present superintendents from around the state want to take Minnesota education from being one of the best in the nation to being one of the best in the world.

“[Minnesota’s Promise](#),” the product of their combined efforts, lays out the plan to improve the state’s education. “The U.S. has an achievement gap compared with the rest of the world among the developed nations,” Kathy Leedom, Willmar Public Schools superintendent, told the [House E-12 Education Committee](#) Jan. 23. “U.S. 15 year olds ranked 24th out of 29 (countries) in math, 24th out of 29 in problem-solving and 15th out of 29 in reading.”

Shortages in numbers of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and clinical laboratory scientists are a chronic problem in Minnesota, and high-tech industry demands for new workers will not be met at our current pace, she said. With “Minnesota’s Promise” rigorous standards, these gaps in employment would be closed.

To ensure the world-class system, the plan proposes rigorous education that will lead to higher education, investing in pre-kindergarten, supporting educators, data and research

that improves teaching and learning, proper funding for schools and mandates, services for special education students, and making global citizenship a core academic subject.

Extending the length of the school year is also part of the plan.

“We live in an information age with school based on an agrarian calendar. Minnesota’s average number of school days is 172; China’s is 230,” Leedom said.

According to the report, “Minnesota is the only state with neither a minimum number of days nor a minimum number of instructional hours.” It also indicates the majority of other U.S. states require 180 days for students.

A 45-15 calendar would be implemented with 45 days of school followed by 15 days of vacation. Proponents say that long summer vacations translate into lost information and teachers must review material from the year before at the beginning of the next school year.

ELECTIONS

Transfer of monies

The [Office of the Secretary of State](#) would be able to reallocate federal [Help America Vote Act](#) (HAVA) appropriations, under a bill approved Jan. 24 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-

Finlayson), [HF160](#) would allow unused appropriations designated for specific HAVA purposes to be transferred to other HAVA purposes. Previous allocation amounts are defined in statute for detailed purposes, said Hilty.

For example, \$120,000 that was designated to process election complaints received by the office that went unused could be transferred for the purpose of maintaining the Statewide Voter Registration System and to develop the capacity to handle registration and election transactions at the polling place.

The \$1.1 million allocated for maintaining the system has been used entirely, and implementing the bill would allow funds to be placed in needed areas, said Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the office. The funds are to be used by the end of June this year, she added.

There was no opposition to the bill, which now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A Senate companion, [SF103](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Contamination concerns

A recent water contamination scare dominated discussion during the Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23, four days after a [Department of Health](#) press release reported that low levels of a toxin had been detected in city wells in several communities south and east of St. Paul.

John Stine, director of the department’s Environmental Health Division, who is mediating the issue, told committee members that there were “no acute health risks” related to the toxin, known as perfluorobutanoic acid, or PFBA. Representatives were not assuaged, however, and challenged Stine about the department’s assessment of the situation and recommendations to the public.

“For the Department of Health to come and say, ‘Well, you know, residents, if you caught this press release and you saw it on the news, you may want to take steps to drink bottled water’ ... Do you understand my frustration?” said [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport), who worried how the chemicals may affect young children and pregnant women.

The release did not strongly advise anyone to limit their intake of public water.

PFBA is a cousin of two compounds — PFOA and PFOS — previously found in water sources in Oakdale and Lake Elmo. PFOA and PFOS, which have been found to affect liver



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Roger Giroux, second from right, superintendent of the Anoka-Hennepin School District, presents a portion of the “Minnesota’s Promise” education report to the House E-12 Education Committee Jan. 23. Other testifiers included, from left, Charlie Kyte executive director of Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Kathy Leedom, Willmar Public Schools superintendent, and Kent Pekel, executive director of the Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success.

and thyroid functions in laboratory rats, are more toxic and reside in the body longer than PFBA, according to Stine, although he said too little information is known to say definitely how PFBA affects humans.

According to the press release, the toxins are believed to derive from waste dumped by the 3M Company, which manufactures a number of popular cleaning and office supply products. Several disposal sites and a chemical plant are located throughout the contaminated area.

Committee members also complained about the department's reliance on 3M for testing information on PFBA toxicity, and its reputed poor communication with several affected communities.

"All that you mentioned was 3M-based research and effort on that," said [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo). "Obviously, while we have a lot of admiration for 3M's efforts, given they are the source as well for these pollutants, I would think we would have to have third parties doing this biomedical research going forward."

Minnesota Forest Legacy easement

In an effort to stop the fragmentation of forest land, the [Department of Natural Resources](#) has the opportunity to buy the development rights of 51,000 acres.

The estimated cost of the land, located in and adjacent to the George Washington State Forest in northern Itasca County and the Koochiching State Forest in southern Koochiching County, is \$15 million.

DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten and Tom Landwehr, assistant state director of The Nature Conservancy, presented this opportunity to the Capital Investment Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23.

The Minnesota Forest Legacy Partnership received \$7 million in bonding receipts from the Legislature last year, but Holsten said the proposal he presented then has significantly changed.

"We aren't looking for any money this year or any new language," he said.

Not anticipating the 51,000 acres to come up when they did, Holsten said the department anticipated using the bonding dollars for several projects over the next two years. Instead, the money will be used to purchase the 51,000 acres.

According to its Web site, the partnership "has established a three-year, \$26 million goal to conserve these forests ... around Itasca County, one of the areas hardest hit by changes in the forest products industry." Once purchased, the lands are to be transferred to the DNR.

GRAVE PROTECTION



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Jim Jones, cultural director of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, explains the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to the Minnesota Heritage Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 22. Annamarie Hill, executive director of the council, is seated next to Jones.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Forest Capital Partners, a real estate company, signed the agreement. Once completed, the agreement — called a conservation easement — will prevent development, provide public access and ensure continued sustainable forest management to provide raw materials, natural resource protection and jobs for the area's resource-based economy.

In addition to the state bonding money, Holsten said the partnership secured another \$12 million — \$6 million from The Blandin Foundation and a \$6 million match from private foundations. He anticipated \$2 million from the Federal Forest Legacy Program, but didn't receive the money because the partnership couldn't guarantee there would be no mining on the land. The state is constitutionally obligated to manage the mineral rights for land in the School Trust Fund.

"We are evaluating other opportunities that are available," Holsten said. "We can make the \$15 million target. We just wanted to tell you it's not quite the deal we told you it was going to be."

Relief for timber industry

A bill approved by a House division aims to bring some much-needed relief to Minnesota's troubled timber industry.

[HF299](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), would allow for the renegotiation of timber contracts by the [Department of Natural Resources](#) — a move Dill said would help stem a recent tide of layoffs and economic stagnation in the industry.

"The bill before you today is in response to the precipitous decline in the timber market," Dill told members of the division, which he chairs.

Dill explained that plummeting timber prices have caused companies that have logging contracts with the DNR to halt logging operations in hopes of a future upturn in the market. That, in turn, has caused hundreds of layoffs and "spin-off layoffs" in peripheral industries, as well as decreasing revenues to the state and to local governments, which depend on income provided by the logging contracts.

In essence, the bill would grant Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Executive Council permission to instruct the DNR to renegotiate the contracts, which were made at a time when timber prices

were at an all-time high, to reflect the current timber prices. Dill said this would provide a “safety net” so that if a similar crisis happens in the future, the industry would not have to wait for the Legislature to convene to receive help.

“If we do give the executive council the authority to do this in the future, should this come up in the [legislative] interim, as it did this time, we can react to it a little more readily,” Dill said.

A few committee members expressed reservations about granting the governor’s council powers that traditionally belong to the Legislature.

“This bill goes much too far,” said [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar), who added that he is very supportive of the state’s loggers.

The bill was approved by the Game, Fish and Forestry Division of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. The bill now goes to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

Intersex fish

A new kind of water pollution that causes fish to acquire both male and female sexual characteristics is prevalent in Minnesota’s rivers and streams, an expert told a House division.

Heiko Schoenfuss, director of St. Cloud State University’s Aquatic Toxicology Laboratory, said that endocrine disruptors, also known as “emerging contaminants,” negatively impact the health of fish by disrupting their estrogen levels, causing male fish to exhibit “intersex” — a combination of male and female reproductive traits.

Schoenfuss, who added that intersex fish have not been reported as widely in Minnesota as in other U.S. states, Europe and Asia, presented his testimony Jan. 23 to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee, which took no immediate action.

“Intersex is a condition that has really raised some eyebrows, and we’re finding it more and more,” Schoenfuss said. “What you see is truly an intersex structure, where you have both male sperm and female eggs in the same structure. Obviously, that’s something that we don’t necessarily consider advantageous.”

The culprits, chemical pollutants that derive from such everyday items as pharmaceuticals, antimicrobial soaps, pesticides, fragrances and perfluorochemicals, have been found in a number of “hot spots” in places like Bemidji, Grand Rapids and St. Cloud, Schoenfuss explained.

Schoenfuss said many of the pollutants most



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Heiko Schoenfuss, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at St. Cloud State University, presents testimony Jan. 23 to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee on endocrine disruptors and their effect on the Mississippi River.

likely enter the ecosystem via water treatment plants, which typically are not equipped to eliminate the chemical compounds in question, and which pump treated water back into the environment.

He said that because research on the phenomenon is difficult and still in its early stages, the human health risks are not completely known, but some of the pollutants involved have previously been linked to everything from low sperm density in men to developmental retardation and cancer.

To help stop proliferation of emerging contaminants, Schoenfuss emphasized actively promoting research, fostering communication between researchers and agencies, and educating the public on the proper disposal of pharmaceuticals and other household items.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairwoman of the division, called Schoenfuss’s testimony “very sobering.”

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

HEALTH

Mental health issues to the forefront

Called a “history-making committee” by one of its members, the Mental Health Division of the House Health and Human Services Committee convened for the first time Jan. 19.

“I’m happy that the speaker has made mental health a division,” said [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls), the division’s chairwoman.

She promised a broad look at mental health issues, and will likely hold hearings on how mental health specifically affects housing and employment; suicide and mental health illnesses and treatment; mental health system weaknesses and case management work; and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and victims of torture.

“I think mental health is an issue almost everyone can relate to because, in one way or another, it impacts our immediate families or our extended families ... and we have to start meeting it at the forefront,” [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) said.

Walker said she expects two “mega-bills” relating to mental health issues to be heard during this session, one from [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) and the other from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Prevention incentives

A bill to limit health savings account tax incentives to people whose high-deductible insurance plan includes preventative care was approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Jan. 23, and awaits action on the House floor. It has no companion in the Senate.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF111](#) is intended to “save lives, while still controlling health care costs.”

Health saving accounts currently enjoy a tax-free status with few restrictions, meaning money invested and interest incurred are not subject to state or federal taxes, and anyone younger than 65 years old cannot be penalized for pulling funds as long as their use is health-related.

Loeffler’s bill would impose a condition that an individual must purchase preventative care coverage, which could include screening for cancer, heart and vascular disease, infectious diseases and mental health and substance abuse, with their health insurance to be eligible for a tax-free health savings account.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) proposed an amendment to strike a clause from the bill. The change, which didn’t pass, absolved those purchasing high-deductible insurance plans



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

As Rep. Diane Loeffler, the bill's sponsor, listens, John Tyler, president of Health Savings Account Inc., testifies Jan 23 before the House Health and Human Services Committee in opposition to a bill that would promote preventive health care by requiring high-deductible health plans used with a health savings account to cover preventive care with no deductible, as permitted by federal law.

from including preventative care coverage without paying deductibles, co-payments or cost-sharing measures.

Loeffler argued removing that language would have rendered the bill meaningless. Emmer argued leaving it as written made the legislation "a mandate, and mandates typically limit options."

John Tyler, a licensed insurance agent and president of Health Savings Account Inc., said that the addition of preventive care coverage could increase premiums.

"There is a segment of the marketplace that is extremely premium sensitive," he said. "The reason they don't purchase (preventative care), is because they are on the fence about whether they can afford the premium, period."

Work rules change

Chuck Johnson, director of Children and Family Services in the [Department of Human Services](#), told the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 24 that new federal mandates for [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#) (MFIP) clients' work obligations are forcing the agency to revamp its program support.

"We really don't know where we're starting from because the regulations are new, and we only have our history to work from," Johnson said.

In other words, the proposal, which will be introduced as legislation later this session, is

not guaranteed to work.

The federal government has required that 50 percent of people receiving federal welfare dollars through the state are to be employed. However, Congress, in an effort to reduce the deficit, redefined work activities and monitoring systems, therefore making it more difficult for the state to reach the 50 percent rate.

Previously, a state could reduce its obligation by factoring in the difference in the number of people receiving MFIP since 1996. Major welfare reform took place in the mid-1990s, which permitted Minnesota to deduct a heavy percentage. Congress reset the year to 2005, making it more difficult for states to meet the threshold. It also narrowed the definition of "work activities."

Johnson covered six proposals that expand how work is defined statewide, re-navigates federal funds to a portion of the state's approximately 40,000 MFIP recipients or impose tougher sanctions on those who do not meet work requirements. The agency proposes to add two employees to handle the new monitoring process, as well.

[Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) worries that additional responsibilities may also burden county staff, who currently administrate most MFIP services.

The agency expects the cost to total about \$1.4 million in 2008, when the policies would be implemented.

If states do not meet federal requirements,

they are penalized through funding. Penalties could cost the program \$13 million a year, and could increase if the state does not meet the work participation rate.

HOUSING

Information not for sale

Homebuyers would have assurance that their mortgage information would not be sold to third parties, under a bill approved Jan. 23 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove), [HF211](#) would prohibit the sale of information obtained from credit reporting agencies and mortgage lenders to a third party. The change would not apply to information provided by the mortgage originator or servicer to a third party when the third party has been retained to perform a service in connection with the origination or the mortgage loan.

Zellers said the issue arose in his own family when he received a letter from another mortgage company detailing his house payments, albeit with a fake account number, and attempting to lure him from his current mortgage provider. Zellers said the only information needed from him to refinance, according to the letter, was his signature.

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) raised the issue of receiving junk mail from affiliates of a person's mortgage lender. Consumer reporting agencies or any other business entity would still be able to give information to affiliates, under the legislation.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, now goes to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Study a new municipality

Northeastern Minnesota may get a new municipality.

Approved Jan. 24 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, [HF119](#) proposes the creation of a 15-member committee to study and recommend to the Legislature whether to establish a "South St. Louis Municipality."

The new municipality would be within the area of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, and include an area roughly 500 square miles around Duluth and several surrounding cities and townships, such as Carlton, Cloquet, Hermantown and Proctor.

[Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), the bill's

sponsor, said the new municipality could “eliminate duplication of public services and reduce costs.”

Though committee members understood the bill’s purpose, some questioned whether it is necessary.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) spoke of how local communities have gathered to share resources and reduce redundancies, and how that might be appropriate in this situation.

Echoing this sentiment and stressing that it is a local matter, [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) said, “I think you can do this without legislation.”

Lanning asked Jaros if there are any resolutions or statements from the local communities supporting the bill, because without them, “The state is telling them what to do.”

Jaros said the bill is not intended to force anyone to do anything, but simply asking that the local communities discuss whether the municipality plan is a good idea.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

MILITARY

Veterans issues seen as priority

The nearly 3,000 Minnesota military personnel currently seeing active duty represent more than 580 communities.

When the troops return, likely in August, it will be the greatest contingent of returning veterans, en masse, in the state’s history. Clark Dyrud, commissioner of the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), wants to make sure that each receives the benefits to which she or he is entitled.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget proposal to substantially increase funding for veterans services will help meet these needs, Dyrud told the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23.

He said that only about 50 percent of veterans apply for the benefits they have coming; therefore, several outreach programs are proposed, along with expanded benefits.

The cornerstone of the governor’s veterans support package is the Minnesota GI Bill for Veterans, which would supplement the federal GI Bill by providing eligible veterans and dependents up to \$1,000 per semester to a total of \$10,000 for up to five years for higher education.

While this package is proposed in the higher education slice of the budget, the department

would support the proposal with more on-campus veterans assistance offices. Figures show that 30 percent of veterans entering college drop out during the first year of school, Dyrud said. To help veterans, especially those who had been in combat, succeed in school, the number of offices would increase from six to 18.

The budget would also fund county veterans service offices.

While all 87 counties provide this service, it was an unfunded state mandate until \$200,000 was budgeted last year. Dyrud proposes \$3.3 million for the upcoming biennium. He said returning veterans largely “trickle in unnoticed,” and his proposal would expand services to help combat veterans reintegrate and make them aware of veteran programs and services.

The expanded programming proposals raised a concern with [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the committee.

“We want to make sure, as we move forward, that the budget not only addresses programming, but staffing needs. We don’t want things to fall through the cracks because there aren’t enough bodies,” he said.

RETIREMENT

Duluth retiree benefits

A bill that attempts to curb the impending \$300 million health care liability for retired Duluth city employees was approved Jan. 24 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF163](#) would allow the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) to establish an irrevocable fund for the city to help pay for post-employment benefits promised to retirees. The Minnesota State Board of Investment would invest money for the fund with earnings credited to the city.

The investment board could do a much better job of investment returns than the city on its own, Huntley said.

The bill, which now goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, comes on the heels of a Jan. 22 report issued by the Office of the Legislative Auditor that expresses serious concerns with post-employment benefits by local jurisdictions that are not adequately funded.

In 1983, the state auditor told Duluth city officials to be more thorough in their accounting practices after learning employees were retiring with large amounts of sick leave time. Negotiations with the unions resulted in free health care for retirees in exchange for giving up the sick leave, Huntley said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

James Grathwol, center, director of government relations for the Minneapolis Public Schools, holds a graph showing the effect of property taxes and school funding for the district. Scott Croonquist, left, executive director of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, and Brad Lundell, right, executive director of Schools for Equity in Education, also testified on education and property tax issues during a Jan. 19 meeting of the Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee.

[Rep. Neil W. Peterson](#) (R-Bloomington) asked if the move would be create a state fiduciary responsibility through PERA.

PERA Executive Director Mary Most Vanek said the legislation allows the organization to simply be “a record keeper” by establishing rules and procedures for irrevocable accounts. “We don’t view this as us being liable for benefits to be paid out of the Duluth account,” she added.

The bill addresses only the city of Duluth, and not others that are in the same predicament. [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, said the committee will revisit the issue, but should allow the Duluth bill to move forward setting a precedent.

A companion bill, [SF60](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Spending government aid

Telling cities how to spend their local government aid was just one of many things legislators took issue with during a joint tax committee meeting Jan. 24.

“How do you justify this precedent of telling cities how to spend their LGA?” [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) asked Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess during a gathering of the House Taxes Committee and its Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

A provision in Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget proposal states that cities with more than 100,000 — only Minneapolis and St. Paul — residents would have to use increases in LGA funding for public safety.

“It seems clear to me that this is a political poke in the eye by the governor,” Paymar said. “I just think you’re setting a bad precedent here. It’s very transparent here to see what you or he is doing.”

Einess said the idea of dedicating the funds to public safety came from a bill sponsored by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) that said LGA should be dedicated to safety in cities with more than 100,000 residents.

“That is totally false,” Mullery said.

He added that in his bill it said a separate pot of money would go to the anti-crime efforts.

“It was never my intention to have LGA be dedicated to anything,” he said. “It was never intended that way and was never stated that way.”

Einess said the language of the bill made it clear that there was a dedicated portion that would go to public safety.

“Whether this comes out of the LGA formula or another dedicated source — a dollar is a dollar is a dollar,” he said. “One dollar spent in LGA is equal to \$1 spent in any other dedicated source. If I misquoted you, I apologize.”

[Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), tax committee chairwoman, said there are cities, like Rochester and Bloomington, which are nearing 100,000 in population.

“There are a lot of large cities that don’t want to dedicate this money for certain things,” she said. “We need to think about who we’re talking about 5 and 10 years out.”

Einess said the governor has been hearing crime has been a problem because of the LGA cuts that have occurred over the last couple of years.

“He thought dedicating LGA money to those purposes was warranted,” Einess said.

Employer education break

Employers whose pocketbook helps employees further their education could get a tax break.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF40](#) would provide a state income tax credit for employers who help pay undergraduate tuition and fees for specific employees.

Approved Jan. 18 by the [Higher Education Work Force Development Policy and Division of the House Finance Committee](#), the bill next goes to the committee’s [Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division](#).

“We all have an interest in improving the educational attainment of all Minnesotans, including older folks and people who are not traditional students, people who went to work right after high school and want to pursue a higher education later,” Thissen said. “Employers have an interest in that because it makes employees more productive, and employees have an obvious interest in improving their wages and educational attainment. But as a state, we do too because the more productive our folks are, the better off all of us are.”

To qualify for the credit, the employee would need to work at least 30 hours per week and earn less than \$20 per hour.

The credit against state individual or corporate income taxes would maximize at 30 percent of the permissible costs, to a maximum of \$2,000 per employee per year.

The original hourly pay rate would have been less than \$12, but the amount was successfully amended upward by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). “At our company, the people that are making \$20 an hour aren’t exactly living high on the hog, and would really benefit from this,” she said.

“If he does \$16 (an hour) we qualify,” noted [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), division chairman. Legislators are paid \$31,140 annually.

“It’s presumptive to think that we’d qualify; first we’d have to get accepted into college,” joked [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights).

No fiscal note was provided, but Rukavina indicated a similar bill last year would have cost about \$5 million at the \$12 hourly rate.

A companion bill, [SF153](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the [Higher Education Budget and Policy Division](#) of the [Senate Finance Committee](#).

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Heritage celebration

[Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) was sporting a green, white and red button during the Jan. 18 meeting of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Division of the House Finance Committee.

“Nice button, Rep. Hortman,” said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman.

“I thought it was [kiss] up to the chair day,” Hortman responded.

“Members, notice our Italian flag there,” said Rukavina. “[House Majority Leader Tony] Sertich, [Sen. David] Tomassoni and I are all of Italian heritage.” He explained that years ago Tomassoni had the buttons made up. “It was one good idea that Sen. Tomassoni has had. Those were our buttons, and they became collector’s items.”

“I think he was also the one who told me, ‘Stick with the rangers and you’re never in danger,’” responded Hortman. “For new members, you might want to adopt that as your motto.”

During that same meeting, talk turned to landlords who don’t properly maintain living quarters they rent to students.

“I know that Rep. (Al) Juhnke and I were without heat in our apartment, and it was tempting not to have to snuggle up just to keep warm,” Rukavina said. “We complained for a week straight. I threatened to bring firewood down from the Range and burn it on the living room floor. They finally got it fixed.”

Some Greater Minnesota legislators share an apartment when they are in St. Paul during the week.

Back to basics

With his duties as speaker of the House behind him, [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) has found time to go back to his classroom roots. Every Tuesday night you can find him tutoring inner-city St. Paul students.

“I have to tell you, there is simply nothing more rewarding than helping others succeed. As a former teacher, it is fun to get back to my classroom roots, and I truly enjoy watching and helping these students learn. Who knows, someday one of these kids may become speaker of the House,” he writes in his e-mail newsletter.

State pension plans

Will there be enough in the coffers?

By PATTY OSTBERG

Thousands of retired public employees may be sitting on the edge of their seats as legislators formulate solutions to recover the state's public employees pension plans that currently have deficits. Between actuarial formulas and decreased market values, the current prospects for plans are concerning.

A \$4 billion deficit looms over the Public Employees Retirement Plan; \$1.6 billion shortfall for the Teachers Retirement Association plan; and \$332 million insufficiency in the Minnesota State Retirement System.

According to a [report](#) released Jan. 22 by the [Office of the Legislative Auditor](#), unless benefit formulas change to reflect the increase and decrease of the market value of plans, among other solutions, there won't be enough in state coffers in future years to meet pension needs.

The problem

The actuarial calculations for state pension plans, determined by the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, uses a funding ratio of assets being equal to liabilities without factoring the ups and downs of the market. Therefore pension plans appear 6 percent to 10 percent better funded than they actually are, according to the report.

There is a logic behind the decision to calculate this way, Legislative Auditor James Nobles told the [House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee](#) Jan. 23.

Currently, when a person retires, enough assets are removed from the active fund and put into the post-retirement fund to support the person's annuity. By this calculation, at some point in time, this person could say they are fully funded. But market influences go up and down, and in the past, retiree benefits increased as the market gained, but when the market decreased the high benefit percentages stayed the same. The result: when the assets go down a deficit incurs.

At odds are employee cohorts because

depending on the year in which you retired, benefits were wide-ranging. For example, those who retired before July 1, 2001, received on average a 9.2 percent annual increase from 1996 to 2001. Those after 2001 received increases of 2.5 percent or less.

Therefore, the post-retirement fund did not retain enough money in good years to offset the lean years, said Jody Hauer, program evaluator principal with the auditor's office.

Past changes

Since the post-retirement fund was created, there have been three formula changes, said

Greg Bergstrom, executive director of the state retirement system.

In the 1970s, a change didn't yield a single increase in benefit. An increase was attempted in the 1980s by moving everything into bonds as a long-term investment, but that didn't work either. The current mechanism was put in place without knowing of an impending large increase followed by a sharp decline in the market from 1998 to 2003, causing the formula to fail. Had the market continued to have mild ups and downs, the current formula would have worked, he said.

In 1998 funding ratios for the plans were at 134 percent. The following year the planning boards were sitting on a large pot of money and suggested to several groups to spread the increases over several years. "We made a very big mistake, we did not do our legwork selling it to the various groups," and other changes occurred instead, Bergstrom said.

In 2005, the Legislature made several changes, although none will offer a remedy for the post-retirement fund deficit, Hauer said.

Last year a 5 percent cap was placed on retirees' benefits and will go into effect in 2010 and will help avoid future deficits, Hauer said. Additionally contribution increases were made, but those will only help active employees in the basic funds and not the retirees with money coming from the post-retirement fund, she noted.

Solutions

The state planning boards are examining the suggestions made by the state auditor for future changes as well as developing some of their own, said Bergstrom.

One option the boards are considering is to combine the active fund with the post-retirement fund, and then change the formula mechanism, he said. Another is to set up contingency funding or make no changes and rely on investment returns to eliminate the deficit in a reasonable time period.

Hauer said that as the Legislature addresses the deficit it should also change the benefit formula by replacing the investment component with an enhanced inflation component instead.

For example, retirees would be giving up the investment-based increase part of the formula,



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Legislative Auditor James Nobles and Jody Hauer, program evaluator with the legislative auditor's office, discuss pensions for volunteer firefighters and post-employee benefits for public employees during the Jan. 23 meeting of the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Pensions continued on page 22

Click it or get a ticket

Bill calls for mandatory seat belt usage

By Mike Cook

Dr. Merle Hillman remembers the day clearly.

Hillman, an emergency physician and president-elect of the state chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, recalls responding to a traffic incident one Sunday morning.

A car containing a family of four crossed the median on Highway 212 and struck another vehicle. The 32-year-old father was declared dead at the scene, and the 35-year-old mother was ejected from the car.

"Despite all of our efforts, I remember declaring her dead and having to tell her children, ages 6 and 8, that their mom and dad had died in this horrible traffic accident," he said. "That vision remains with me to this day."

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) does not want any family to have to experience a motor vehicle fatality because of failure to buckle up. He is sponsoring [HF106](#) to improve Minnesota's rate of buckled-up passengers.

The bill would make failure to wear a seat belt a primary offense, meaning a violator could be stopped solely for this purpose. Under current law, a citation can be issued only if a motorist is stopped for another offense.

It also requires that everyone in a passenger or commercial vehicle be buckled up. Present law requires seat belt use for any front-seat passenger and "a passenger riding in any seat of a passenger vehicle who is older than 3 but younger than 11 years of age."

Approved nearly unanimously by the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee of the [Transportation Division](#) of the [House Finance Committee](#) Jan. 24, the bill now goes to the committee's [Public Safety Finance Division](#).

"We can take a concrete step toward saving lives — 40 lives a year is the estimate — and avoiding 400 serious injuries," said Thissen, who noted that 71 percent of Minnesotans support mandatory seat belt usage. It is estimated that primary seat belt laws in 25



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Loni Kjos of Alexandria shares the story of losing her daughter in a car crash with the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee of the Transportation Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 24. She supports a bill that would make seat belt violations a primary offense.

other states have increased usage by 11 percent and decreased traffic fatalities by 10 percent.

Plus, this would help rein in health care costs.

"The health costs for an unbelted driver in a crash are 50 percent higher than the medical costs for a belted driver," Thissen said. "Those are dollars we could otherwise spend reducing people's premiums or expanding access to health care or doing any number of other things. The estimates are that we'll save \$85

million to our state government over the next eight years."

Public Safety Commissioner Michael Campion said it is his understanding that the governor, who supported similar legislation in the past as a House member, would sign this bill if it reaches his desk. "This legislation, with its outcomes, doesn't cost anything," he said.

But it could earn the state \$15 million in federal funds, which would in part be used for roadway safety improvements.

Katherine Burke Moore, deputy director of the [Office of Traffic Safety](#) in the [Department of Public Safety](#), said 83 percent of Minnesotans wear their seat belt. However, she noted that 60 percent of people who died in Minnesota crashes last year were from the 17 percent of those unbuckled.

Dying in a vehicle crash is unexpected and violent, she said. "We don't accept homicides as something that is acceptable, yet we have four times as many traffic fatalities. We want that number to go down. ... The ultimate price is a family who loses someone in a crash."

Loni Kjos of Alexandria knows that all too well. Her 17-year-old daughter, Kelsey, was killed in a crash on Nov. 8, 2004.

"School was out at 2:30 and she caught a ride home with a girlfriend," she said. "The driver lost control of the car and it rolled. The driver was belted, and she had only a simple hand injury. Our Kelsey was not wearing her seat belt and was thrown from the vehicle." She died en route to the hospital.

The incident left her parents wondering why she wasn't belted in, because she always wore her seat belt when driving and always wore it when riding with her mother. "Did she unfasten it to reach for something or did she just plain forget? We will never know," Kjos said. "Just that one click would have made all the difference in the world to everyone who loved her."

Conversely, her son, Grant, was wearing a seat belt when he was involved in a crash seven years ago. Although he sustained a brain injury, he has made a full recovery.

"Every community has their own Kelsey story," she said. "It's time to make a difference. It's time to stop the loss."

Seat belts continued on page 22

Wanting coverage for all

Bunn makes health care reform her top priority

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Between Election Day and the first day of session, [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) was able to take a vacation that included relaxing



Rep. Julie Bunn

on a beach with a good book.

Opting against a light, easy read, she paged through “Transforming Public Policy,” a book about the strategic use of policy entrepreneurship and innovation in developing public policy. “It was the most exciting book I have recently read. It was so good.”

Bunn, who spent four years on the Lake Elmo Planning Commission, said that health care coverage and cost were the most important issues that came up while talking to constituents when she went door-to-door through her district. Among her committee

assignments are the House Health and Human Services Committee and the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee.

“Even though Washington County is one of the wealthiest counties in the state, there are still gaps in [medical] coverage,” she said. “From layoffs, divorces and 20-somethings going off their parent’s health coverage, people are struggling to pay for insurance.”

Health care, in her opinion, is equivalent to the Cold War issue of a previous era. “If we don’t solve the problem of skyrocketing health care costs, there will not be enough funds for our schools, transportation systems or clean water.”

Bunn, who has a Ph.D in economics from Stanford University, is also troubled with how the state has fulfilled its budgetary needs using one-time funds or accounting shifts.

She is also concerned with schools not receiving a stable source of funding, or enough

| DISTRICT 56A |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,812 |
| Largest city: Woodbury |
| County: Washington |
| Top concerns: Health care costs and education funding |

to maintain current educational levels. The governor’s budget proposal still comes up short, she said. “Four percent a year may not meet the needs, even though we should try to reform schools.”

Bunn believes that middle- and lower-income families should not pay a disproportionate share of taxes, and that a fair state tax policy includes closing foreign operating corporation loopholes and going after tax cheaters that cost the state an estimated \$1 billion annually.

When Bunn is able to grab a moment of free time, she enjoys five-mile outdoor walks and cooking while listening to novels on tape or on her MP3 player.

New but experienced

Gottwalt brings nine years of city council experience

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

[Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) sees being in politics as an extension of giving back to the community.



Rep. Steve Gottwalt

And he’s done just that for a decade.

Having served on the St. Cloud City Council for nine years, Gottwalt is now starting his first term at the Capitol. “I’m not one to sit on the sidelines and criticize,” he said.

Gottwalt offers a message to the people of the state, “I believe we live in a land of opportunity, not entitlement. I believe government has an important but limited role to play in addressing our needs and wants.”

A main issue facing his district is transportation. Gottwalt sees the Northstar

commuter rail line as vital link from his area to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

“From St. Cloud to Rochester, it is one of the fastest growing parts of the Midwest, if not the whole country,” he said, adding that this link is vital to the long-term growth of St. Cloud.

Gottwalt is serving on two education committees. He plans to introduce a bill forcing mandated programs to be fully funded. “If we’re going to have mandated programs, we need to be told up front on how it is going to be paid,” he said.

“It’s not about dollars, it’s about excellence. Teachers need to be accountable for their performance,” said Gottwalt, who also believes that parents must also be held accountable for their student’s academic achievement or failure.

“Parent involvement is the number-one indicator for success in school,” Gottwalt said. “Two generations of parenting skills

| DISTRICT 15A |
|--------------------------------------|
| 2002 population: 36,702 |
| Largest city: St. Cloud |
| County: Stearns |
| Top concerns: Education and business |

have been lost, and this is negatively affecting today’s youth and their ability to learn.” With more and more single parents raising children alone, generations of children are going without fathers who would normally be there to help and raise their young, he said.

Gottwalt wants to see best practices being implemented in schools, instead of more money “being thrown at a problem.”

“We should take ideas from around the state and try to implement what works in other schools, he said.”

A communications director for a grocery store chain, Gottwalt’s other priorities are ensuring that cities and the state live within their means, and seeing marketplace reforms in areas that need it.

Activism in a new place

In St. Paul, Madore to fight for familiar issues

By Mike Cook

Like many parents with school-aged children, [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) has purchased enough wrapping paper to last for a few years.



Rep. Shelley Madore

"I'd really like to see my families not have to have another fundraiser next year to pay for a teacher," she said. One of her goals this year is to increase special education funding, an issue that is especially important to her family. Her 16-year-old daughter, Erica, has spina bifida and her 13-year-old son, Jason, has autism.

She also hopes to work on ways for businesses to partner with schools for special needs students, such as through mentoring programs.

"A lot of our kids need pre-employment

experience, and maybe working through a mentorship program with the businesses will help them to learn there is a reason to stay in school," she said, noting that for every regular education student that drops out of school, three special education students leave. "These kids are already having a tough enough time without a high school diploma."

Madore started the first Cub Scout pack in the country for boys with autism. Although the pack has since disbanded, she is proud that four boys earned the "Arrow of Light," the highest rank in Cub Scouts.

"I was a Girl Scout leader for seven years, and then I wanted my son to have that experience," she said.

After years as a community activist, including stints with city and school committees, Madore knew it was time to be of assistance on a larger stage. "I just said, 'You know, I can really make an impact at the Legislature given my knowledge base.'"

DISTRICT 37A

2002 population: 36,915

Largest city: Burnsville

County: Dakota

Top concerns: Transportation, property tax relief and education

Madore represents two communities for which transit is a key issue. Cedar Avenue is on the west side of her district; Interstate 35W is on the east. Commuters often face congestion on both roadways.

"We need to look at the cost-effectiveness between (bus rapid transit) and (light-rail transit) to bring down Cedar," said Madore, who serves on the Transportation Division of the House Finance Committee, and is vice chairwoman of the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee. Additionally, she would also like to see funding available to increase routes for the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, which serves both communities.

Fixing health care

Murphy mixes passions for health care, politics

By Nick Busse

Ask [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) why she ran for office, and you're likely to get a very specific answer: "to fix health care."



Rep. Erin Murphy

To be sure, Murphy has other issues on her agenda: education, the environment, global warming, renewable energy, mass transit and civil rights, to name a few. But for Murphy, a registered nurse and current executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association, health care is her bread and butter.

"When I door-knocked this summer, what I heard from people was that health care was getting so expensive they're worried they're

going to lose their coverage," Murphy said. "That lack of security is really worrisome to people."

Born and raised in a working-class Wisconsin household, Murphy said she inherited her politics from her parents.

"I grew up in a family that talked politics," she said, adding that she worked on her first political campaign while she was in the eighth grade. (Her candidate won a seat in the Wisconsin State Senate.)

But the idea of entering politics didn't occur to her until much later in life, when she saw how great a role public policy played in her chosen profession.

"When I started studying nursing, I was very content with the idea of working in a hospital and for a few years, didn't even think about politics," Murphy said. "But it doesn't take long to see that the reach of a practicing

nurse ... is limited by policy."

She spent several years lobbying on behalf of the nurses association, and when her predecessor, Rep. Matt Entenza, announced he was stepping down to run for attorney general last year, she knew the time was right to run for office.

Murphy said her No. 1 priority is to work toward universal health care coverage for all Minnesotans—a step she believes is necessary to help control the rising cost of health care.

"If we were able, through policymaking, to put more order to it and stretch the dollars so more people could get covered, then I think we would actually have the leverage to be able to ratchet down costs," she said.

DISTRICT 64A

2002 population: 36,752

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Top concern: Health care

Making a move

After 32 years in one role, Olin moves to House

By CRAIG GREEN

After [Rep. Dave Olin](#) (DFL-Thief River Falls) graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School, he moved to Thief River Falls to work as an attorney.



Rep. Dave Olin

When he was elected Pennington County attorney two years later, Olin thought he would hold the position four to eight years, at the most, before building his private practice.

“Lo and behold, I started to enjoy public service,” said Olin. “I enjoy doing things for the public. I never got the itch to leave the job.” He stayed for the next 32 years.

When Olin finally left his position, he again thought that he would return to his private law practice. But when former Rep. Maxine

Penas decided not to run for re-election, Olin saw this as another opportunity to use his experience to serve his constituents.

“I had been concerned about what had been going on in the public sector and local government aid, and the fact that property taxes have been going up significantly and costing citizens in my district money,” said Olin. “I thought that maybe by running for the Legislature, I could [work to] reverse the trend of local property taxes going up.”

Education, another central point for Olin, is a common theme in his family. His mother and his sister taught, and one of his daughters is a teacher.

Olin is concerned “that there hasn’t been enough emphasis put on things like early education.”

Reflecting on his years of experience dealing with youth as a county attorney, Olin believes that there is a need for after-school programs,

DISTRICT 1A

2002 population: 36,485
Largest city: Thief River Falls
Counties: Kittson, Marshall, Pennington, Roseau
Top concerns: Property taxes and education

and programs that give youth positive and nurturing role models.

Olin’s district is also home to many parks and forests, and residents who love to ride snowmobiles and ATVs. Olin will not only work to protect the environment, but also to ensure that his constituents are free to fully enjoy their environment, without unnecessary government restrictions, he said.

Continuing his years of service in his new role at the House, Olin said, “I represent all the constituents in my district. Whether they are Republican, Democrat, independent, or whatever party they may be, I am their legislator.”

Passion for education

Tillberry goes from school board to statehouse

By MIA SIMPSON

[Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley) knows the issues he wants to affect, and they all have something to do with young people.



Rep. Tom Tillberry

As a high school counselor, he’s seen and helped treat many problems facing youth: drugs, academics, mental illness, homelessness, college and career. He’s also been a school board member and a teacher’s union organizer.

“I think the times, the way they are right now, I have to get involved,” he said. “I’m just asking for fairness. Life is hard enough. Can’t we help each other?”

His first stint in public service was 2005, when he was elected as a write-in candidate for the Fridley School Board. For a half-decade prior, he was a negotiator and representative for Education Minnesota in Roseville, the city where he’s worked as a school counselor for 11 years.

He decided to run for state office after he was approached by former Rep. Connie Bernardy, who announced last July that she would not seek re-election.

“She asked me if I would do it,” he said. “I’ve always been a supporter of hers. The support that I got from her campaign was wonderful.”

He remembers nights during the campaign when dozens of students gathered in his family’s basement to stuff literature and prepare other campaign materials. He has deep respect for his young supporters, and a concern for making sure they get the best from their schools.

“I can talk education all over the place,” he said.

Tillberry has traveled to several South American countries on medical missions and music tours – he plays trumpet in his church orchestra – and to visit foreign classrooms.

“I’ve seen students there eager to learn,” he said. “A lot of them don’t even have a fair opportunity.”

DISTRICT 51B

2002 population: 36,686
Largest city: Blaine
Counties: Anoka, Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, health care and property taxes

He simulated the political process for students at Roseville Area High School in an attempt to engage them in politics. In one case, Tillberry showed video of floor debate on a bill, and asked students whether they thought it deserved passage. They didn’t.

Tillberry said it’s important to make issues and governmental process real for young people, especially as education funding drops.

“Eventually, our pride in our state is falling apart,” he said. “I’m seeing it in student apathy.”

Tillberry sits on the House Commerce and Labor, E-12 Education and Taxes committees, and the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Division of the House Finance Committee.

Not slowing down

Ward continues his public service in St. Paul

By **MIKE COOK**

As they tearfully drove away from their hometown of Proctor 20 years ago, [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd) was asked by his



Rep. John Ward

wife, Sally, not to get so involved in the teachers' union and never run for office again.

He agreed, but not for long.

"She has always allowed John Ward to be John Ward," he said. "I've always been so actively involved in my community, in my church, but I've never been this busy and this active. But it's really exciting, it's a great opportunity."

A class president in high school, he spent two years on the Proctor City Council and three more as mayor, before a career opportunity necessitated his move to the Central Lakes Area.

Now, as a House member, he serves on the House E-12 Education Committee and two education divisions of the House Finance Committee.

"I taught for 33 years and coached for 25 of those years," he said. "I worked in many different educational areas, everything from an elementary school to a middle school to a junior high to a senior high. I started an alternative education program and directed that, and I even worked in a prison. I also have a broad base of curricula that I taught: phy. ed, driver's ed, health and I coached. For most of my career I was a special ed teacher with learning disabled children and emotional behavior disorder children."

Ward, who retired last May, received many awards during his education and coaching careers, culminating with being named the Wal-Mart State Teacher of the Year in 2006.

Proud of the \$10,000 to his district that came with the award, Ward said the best part

| DISTRICT 12A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,813 |
| Largest city: Brainerd |
| County: Crow Wing |
| Top concerns: Education, health care access and equitable property taxes |

was knowing it was students and parents that nominated him.

His work ethic is something that was ingrained early in life.

"Being taught lessons about hard work, caring about people and giving back are all really important lessons," he said. "I did that as a mayor and an educator, now I'm hoping to do that as a state legislator. I'm just a plain, ordinary person that wants to do what's best for everybody."

Other areas he hopes to work on include access to quality health care and property tax reform.

Keepin' it together

Wollschlager brings work ethic to State Capitol

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

The office of [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls) feels like a nature hike through her district. Local artists' works line



Rep. Sandy Wollschlager

the walls with framed sketches, watercolors, and mixed media of local creeks and dams.

The colorful landscapes will "remind me of the people, the things I love," and the land her constituents want her to protect, she said. They will also

remind her of why she ran for office during late night meetings, she added with a laugh.

Wollschlager said she hopes to have the opportunity to use her House committee assignments to foster outdoor funding for habitats, but other issues in her district will be her focus as well.

Property tax increases are a frequent concern voiced by her constituents. As vice chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee, she will have firsthand knowledge of ways to reduce these rates, which she said is her top priority on the committee. When "property taxes go up \$100, it hurts," particularly for the working class, she said.

Observing and collecting those constituent concerns are her responsibility as a legislator, Wollschlager said. "If you're in the working class ... you don't have time for politics."

After graduating from high school, Wollschlager worked as a boxer at a turkey factory. Adding up the turkey-weight per box was not something she saw as a lifelong career.

Instead, Wollschlager, a senior regulatory affairs specialist at 3M, earned a chemistry degree from Augsburg College and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University, both while raising two children with her husband.

| DISTRICT 28A |
|----------------------------------|
| 2002 population: 36,636 |
| Largest city: Red Wing |
| Counties: Wabasha, Goodhue |
| Top concern: Property tax reform |

At Harvard, she met several former Minnesota legislators who told her, "business is easy for you, we need people to do public service," she said. A run for the local school board upon her return set her on course to the Legislature.

She is proud of being able to keep her family intact while driving forward in her career. "Sometimes it's not about outright brilliance, it's about keeping it all together," she said.

Wollschlager also serves on the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, and the Veterans Affairs Division of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Monday, January 22

HF228-Paymar (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent School District No. 625, St. Paul, prior uncovered service purchase authorized relating to retirement.

HF229-Howes (R)

Finance

Accelerated highway construction projects funding provided and money appropriated.

HF230-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Predatory offender registration law expanded to include offenders under the domestic assault by strangulation statute.

HF231-Moe (DFL)

Finance

Greater Minnesota Business Development Investment Fund established and money appropriated.

HF232-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education

School district integration revenue formula modified.

HF233-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education

International Baccalaureate pilot program established across all grades of a school district and money appropriated.

HF234-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education

School district reserve fund requirements and reports eliminated and school district primary elections required only after adoption of a resolution.

HF235-Murphy, E. (DFL)

Finance

Developmental screening aid funding increased.

HF236-Greiling (DFL)

E-12 Education

School districts authorized to delay the implementation of special education tuition billing for an additional two years.

HF237-Morgan (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Pre-election reports required of certain contributions to political committees, funds and party units; reporting requirements modified; and contribution limits increased for secretary of state and state auditor candidates.

HF238-Jaros (DFL)

E-12 Education

Legislative Commission on High School Reform established.

HF239-Lesch (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Sexual assault counselor testimonial confidentiality provided, mistake of age defense eliminated for certain sexual assault offenders and penalties enhanced for non-consensual sexual offenses committed by massage or bodywork professionals.

HF240-Lesch (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Sheriff, deputy sheriff and coroner prohibition on practicing law repealed.

HF241-Erickson (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

English designated as the official state language.

HF242-Eken (DFL)

Taxes

Mahnomen County tax jurisdiction temporary aid payments made permanent.

HF243-Walker (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Ombudsman for corrections reestablished and money appropriated.

HF244-Ozment (R)

Finance

Clean Water Legacy account General Fund transfer provided.

HF245-Anzelc (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Adult foster care licensing requirements modified.

HF246-Hortman (DFL)

Finance

Metropolitan Council required to study and report on light rail and commuter rail feasibility for the I-394 corridor, and feasibility of combining I-394 and Southwest rail transit corridors, and money appropriated.

HF247-Kranz (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Wild animal removal from urban areas provided.

HF248-Solberg (DFL)

Finance

Canisteo Mine Outflow Project funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF249-Kranz (DFL)

Finance

Independent School District No. 16, Spring Lake Park, lease levy requirements exception authorized.

HF250-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Ambulance service and inter-hospital transfer provisions modified.

HF251-Brod (R)

Taxes

Tax reform action commission established, appointments provided, report to Legislature required and money appropriated.

HF252-Anzelc (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Part-time peace officer restrictions repealed.

HF253-Buesgens (R)

E-12 Education

Election to detach land for a new school district provided.

HF254-Mahoney (DFL)

Finance

Job training program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF255-Svigum (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Plant hazards to livestock and consumers evaluation and report required.

HF256-Peppin (R)

Finance

Anoka County; Highway 101 and I-94 interchanges funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF257-Peppin (R)

Health & Human Services

Council on Disability sunset delayed.

HF258-Greiling (DFL)

E-12 Education

Congress memorialized, by resolution, to offer greater flexibility to states and fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act as part of its reauthorization.

HF259-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Grandparent visitation rights provided on behalf of the child, grandparent visitation rights expanded, procedures specified and mediation required.

HF260-Kalin (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Veterans exempted from the requirement of a firearm safety certificate.

HF261-Brod (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Reapportionment procedures established.

HF262-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF263-Paulsen (R)

Taxes

Education credit income tax inflation adjustment provided.

HF264-Ruth (R)

Finance

Trunk Highway 14 between Dodge Center and Owatonna reconstruction funding provided and money appropriated.

HF265-Severson (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Minnesota GI Bill program for veterans established to provide postsecondary education assistance, eligibility and assistance amount determined and money appropriated.

HF266-Paulsen (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Legislature; House and Senate membership reduced.

HF267-Olson (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Municipal boundary adjustment advisory task force extended.

HF268-Howes (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Driver's license reinstatement fee and surcharge imposed for certain driving offenses, proceeds deposited for state patrol funding and money appropriated.

HF269-Howes (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

County office appointment and consolidation provided subject to notice, hearing and reverse referendum.

HF270-Howes (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Habitual truant termination of jurisdiction provision removed.

HF271-Haws (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Lawful purpose gambling expenditures modified to include licensed fraternal organizations.

HF272-Haws (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service.

HF273-Howes (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Fireworks sale and personal use authorized.

HF274-Juhnke (DFL)
Finance
Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF275-Brod (R)
Health & Human Services
MinnesotaCare contingent reduction in tax rates provided.

HF276-Otremba (DFL)
Health & Human Services
MinnesotaCare self-employed farmers income definition modified.

HF277-Clark (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Window screens in new residential dwellings required to comply with safety standards.

HF278-Hansen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Deer license surcharge imposed for deer management and reimbursing the cost of processing deer donated for charitable purposes, and money appropriated.

HF279-Haws (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
War Orphans Act educational benefits eligibility clarified and extended for surviving military spouses and children.

HF280-Dill (DFL)
Finance
Lake County tax-forfeited lands proceeds temporary suspension of apportionment provided.

HF281-Moe (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local governmental planning assistance provided, regional development commissions required to submit annual work programs and money appropriated.

HF282-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Pharmaceutical products exception provided where competition exists relating to law prohibiting sales below cost.

HF283-Ruth (R)
Taxes
Cities, counties and townships exempted from sales tax.

HF284-Ruth (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Special assessment deferments authorized for members of the armed forces, and grants from the Support Our Troops account authorized for eligible individuals to pay special assessments.

HF285-Severson (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to state firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF286-Abeler (R)
Finance
Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF287-Holberg (R)
Commerce & Labor
Employers required to give notice of employee rights relating to personnel record review and access.

HF288-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Crime victim support grant funding provided and money appropriated.

HF289-Kalin (DFL)
Minnesota Heritage Finance Division
State Capitol tour fee charges prohibited.

HF290-Mahoney (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
University Enterprise Laboratories Inc. funding provided for bioscience business development and money appropriated.

HF291-Dominguez (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veterans home employees granted commissary privileges when working double shifts.

HF292-Ozment (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Video display devices collection, transportation and recycling provided.

HF293-Tingelstad (R)
Finance
Environment and Natural Resources funding provided, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources meeting requirements modified and money appropriated.

HF294-Mullery (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Pollution Control Agency structure modified.

HF295-Welti (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
State employee energy savings suggestions incentives provided.

HF296-Solberg (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Special paper products vehicle permit effective date modified.

HF297-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health care premiums restricted, universal health care plan required, MinnesotaCare provisions modified, residents right to affordable health care stated, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF298-Huntley (DFL)
Finance
Family planning access increased to prevent unintended pregnancies, nurses authorized to dispense oral contraceptives at clinics, reimbursement rates increased, grant reductions eliminated and money appropriated.

HF299-Dill (DFL)
Game, Fish & Forestry Division
Timber permit extension, cancellation and terminations provided.

HF300-Haws (DFL)
Taxes
Military pay tax deduction expanded and military pension subtraction including survivor benefits created.

HF301-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
Blighted housing rehabilitation program established and nuisance properties transferred to nonprofit housing organizations.

Thursday, January 25

HF302-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Early childhood and pre-kindergarten grant programs established, kindergarten developmental assessment expanded and money appropriated.

HF303-Paymar (DFL)
Finance
Youth intervention program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF304-Simpson (R)
Taxes
Budget reserves provided, property tax and levy provisions modified, federal tax conformity provided, military income and pension exclusion provided, and sales tax exemptions specified.

HF305-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 adopted establishing public policy to protect employees and the public from hazards of secondhand smoke and prohibiting people from smoking in specified areas.

HF306-Greiling (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Youth mental health screening and suicide prevention funding provided and money appropriated.

HF307-Hilstrom (DFL)
E-12 Education
Independent School District No. 286, Brooklyn Center, innovation district program grant provided and money appropriated.

HF308-Olin (DFL)
Finance
Bovine tuberculosis control funding provided and money appropriated.

HF309-Gottwalt (R)
Health & Human Services
Long-term care insurance income tax credit adjusted.

HF310-Dill (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Off-sales by brewpubs and small brewers regulations modified.

HF311-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Cell phones; moving violation fines doubled when committed while operating mobile phone.

HF312-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Council elections provided.

HF313-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Home care tax credit established and money appropriated.

HF314-Buesgens (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Senate living, per diem and mileage expense amounts determined by resolution of the full Senate.

HF315-Otremba (DFL)
Finance
Suicide prevention grants restored and money appropriated.

HF316-Thao (DFL)
Finance
Refugees and those seeking asylum exempted from participating in the diversionary work program.

HF317-DeLaForest (R)
Health & Human Services
MinnesotaCare provider taxes repealed.

HF318-Jaros (DFL)
Finance
Commission on Minnesota Ethnic Heritage established and money appropriated.

HF319-Kelliher (DFL)
Finance
Regional library basic system support and multi-county, multi-type library systems funding provided and money appropriated.

HF320-Anzelc (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Public Employees Retirement Association nursing facilities cost reimbursement methods established and money appropriated.

HF321-Peppin (R)**Health & Human Services**

Health benefit mandates moratorium imposed.

HF322-Rukavina (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Judicial branch prohibited from imposing restrictions on political activities of represented employees unless provided by contract.

HF323-Mullery (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Tenant applicant screening fees provisions modified.

HF324-Holberg (R)**E-12 Education**

Public school employees prohibited from using public funds and resources to advocate, to pass, elect or defeat a political candidate, ballot question or pending legislation.

HF325-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Lake Zumbro restoration funding provided and money appropriated.

HF326-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Gold Star Family special license plates authorized for family members of military personnel who have died in active military service, and plate fee and registration tax exempted for certain survivors.

HF327-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

School readiness programs state aid increased and money appropriated.

HF328-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Stearns County grant provided to purchase land for Kraemer Lake Park and money appropriated.

HF329-Carlson (DFL)**Finance**

Intermediate school districts authorized to engage in short-term borrowing in anticipation of incoming funds.

HF330-Anderson, S. (R)**Taxes**

Telecommuting income tax credit provided.

HF331-Westrom (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sex offender tracking and monitoring bracelets required upon release from prison, penalties prescribed and money appropriated.

HF332-Hosch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

People with life-threatening medical conditions allowed to spend down excess income under MinnesotaCare.

HF333-Lillie (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State employees compensated for time they were not able to work due to the 2005 partial government shutdown.

HF334-Hosch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare income exclusions allowed for certain medical expenses.

HF335-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Stearns County grant provided to purchase property for Kraemer Lake Park, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF336-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Speech-language pathologist and audiologist master's or doctoral degree requirement imposed.

HF337-Mahoney (DFL)**Finance**

Small business growth acceleration program established, and money appropriated.

HF338-Seifert (R)**Taxes**

Adoption income tax credit authorized.

HF339-Haws (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to state firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF340-Slawik (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Candidates and campaign workers authorized to have access to multiple unit residences for campaign and election purposes.

HF341-Gottwalt (R)**Health & Human Services**

Stearns and St. Louis counties group residential housing provider moratorium exceptions provided.

HF342-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Mentoring grant for children of incarcerated parents authorized, and money appropriated.

HF343-Cornish (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Remote-controlled animal noise callers exempted from the general prohibition on using radios to take game animals.

HF344-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Olmsted County municipal solid waste combustor expansion authorized, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF345-Severson (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

All-electric single family dwellings exempted from carbon monoxide alarm installation requirement.

HF346-Severson (R)**Taxes**

City aid local government aid base increased for certain cities.

HF347-Gardner (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Yard waste bags required to be compostable.

HF348-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

St. Cloud State University National Hockey Center improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF349-Solberg (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 4, McGregor, declining enrollment grant authorized and money appropriated.

HF350-Zellers (R)**Finance**

Highway 610 four-lane freeway project completion matching funds provided and money appropriated.

HF351-Kohls (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Life sentence imposed for people convicted of three or more violent felonies.

HF352-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators, constitutional officers and commissioners prohibited from lobbying for one year after termination of office.

HF353-Bigham (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators, constitutional officers, agency heads and certain legislative employees prohibited from lobbying for one year after termination of office.

HF354-Anzelc (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Timber harvesting local economic impact statement required.

HF355-Nornes (R)**Finance**

Academic competitiveness highlighting individual excellence and valuing education grant program established and money appropriated.

HF356-Kalin (DFL)**Taxes**

Taylor's Falls border city development zone powers authorized.

HF357-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Lake County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF358-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Cook County higher education project funding provided and money appropriated.

HF359-Hansen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Airports Commission expanded to include mayors.

HF360-Ruud (DFL)**Finance**

Intermediate school district member districts authorized to levy for school safety activities at facilities operated by the intermediate district.

HF361-Welti (DFL)**Taxes**

Regional investment income and franchise tax credit provided.

HF362-Hortman (DFL)**Taxes**

Anoka County deed and mortgage tax authorized, and environmental response fund created.

HF363-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Employee organization provided access to employees at certain meetings, card-check procedures provided for certifying an exclusive representative, and tax treatment of employer expenditures in opposing unionization efforts specified.

HF364-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Appropriating money for bovine tuberculosis disease transmission prevention.

HF365-Greiling (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Modifying the alternative teacher pay calculation for intermediate school districts.

HF366-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Increasing equity revenue for districts above the 95th percentile.

Budget continued from page 4

(DFL-Duluth), chairman of the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee, asked why the governor's proposal stops at that particular number.

"Sixty-five thousand are already eligible. Why aren't we pushing for them, too? We can really do more," Huntley said.

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Health and Human Services Committee, offered a more general critique of the governor's health care proposals.

"The thing I think we have to focus on is not just the expansion of coverage, but making it more meaningful. And I don't think the governor's plan goes far enough in making sure that health care coverage is meaningful," Thissen said.

Veterans

Pawlenty put forth a veterans and military package that more than doubles the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget and phases out the state income tax on military pay and pensions over a four-year period. It also provides college tuition assistance for eligible veterans and their dependents and additional funds for a number of veterans support and outreach programs, including new money for veterans assistance offices on college campuses.

"We better have, as a state — as a priority for this legislative session — a generous and robust veterans package, and we've outlined one that I think is aggressive but suitable and sustainable," Pawlenty said.

Doubling the Department of Veterans

Affairs' budget allows for a substantial increase in programming, but some question whether the current staffing level has the capabilities of "taking it all on."

"We want to make sure, as we move forward, that the budget not only addresses programming, but staffing needs. We don't want things to fall through the cracks because there aren't enough bodies," said [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Division of the House Finance Committee.

Energy

Pawlenty's budget proposals include his "Next Generation Energy Plan," a \$40 million package that would fund new research in renewable energy, and help establish 1,500 new E-85 ethanol fueling stations throughout Minnesota.

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), chairman of the Energy Finance and Policy Division of the House Finance Committee, declined to discuss specifics, but said he was skeptical about the sources of the new funding.

"I think the goals that the governor has expressed in his budget are good, but I want to make sure before we go too far with this that it's not at the expense of something else," Hilty said.

Public safety

The governor's budget recommendations include new funding for state troopers, correctional institutions, offender supervision, the CrimNet criminal justice

information system and the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) communications system, among other things. But some House DFLers say it's not enough.

"There's not enough going into drug and mental health rehabilitation," said [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. "There are a lot of people going into the prison system who abuse drugs or have mental problems. If we don't start addressing these problems now, we're going to have problems later."

Transportation

Some of Democrats' harshest criticism of Pawlenty's budget proposals came in the area of transportation.

"I think that the Legislature will take the leadership role in terms of having the conversation with Minnesotans about what they need in the transportation area," Kelliher said, citing the governor's recommendation of \$100 million in trunk highway bonding as inadequate.

Kelliher mentioned a "bipartisan" bill, sponsored by [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) and [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), that would raise the gas tax, as a proposal the House will likely be bringing forth. 🗽

— CRAIG GREEN, SONJA HEGMAN, PATTY OSTBERG,
MIA SIMPSON, MIKE COOK AND LEE ANN SCHUTZ
ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE.

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but in exchange they'd have the enhanced security of a fully funded fund and improved benefit increases for the near term.

Right now, under the formula, the most they can receive is a 2.5 percent increase,

Hauer noted. Employers would contribute additional funds upfront for a reduced risk of future deficits.

The report notes this sort of change could result in court battles, although a package that would include tradeoffs would more likely

meet legal standards rather than a straight reduction in benefits by itself.

"There will be a bill before us at some point," said [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman. 🗽

Seatbelts continued from page 14

Not all in agreement

Among those not supporting the bill are Gary Fincel from Prior Lake and Charles Samuelson, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota.

Fincel said law enforcement personnel should focus on other problematic drivers, such as those who are intoxicated or driving recklessly.

"I would just as soon have them protect me from those drivers, than to have them protect me from myself," he said.

In a statement shared with the committee, Samuelson expressed concern about the violation of constitutional rights, especially for minority residents.

He wrote, "It will likely result in increased incidences of racial profiling on Minnesota highways, thereby magnifying the racial

disparities that already exist in our criminal justice system. At a minimum, this bill should include provisions to address racial profiling before granting law enforcement even more power to inflict justice on motorists based on their race."

A companion, [SF16](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), has been approved by two committees, and awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. 🗽

2007-08 Minnesota Senate

| District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- | District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|----------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 66 | Anderson, Ellen R. (DFL)..... | 120 Cap..... | 5537 | 39 | Metzen, James P. (DFL)..... | 322 Cap..... | 4370 |
| 6 | Bakk, Thomas M. (DFL)..... | 226 Cap..... | 8881 | 41 | Michel, Geoff (R)..... | 133 SOB..... | 6238 |
| 61 | Berglin, Linda (DFL)..... | 309 Cap..... | 4261 | 67 | Moua, Mee (DFL)..... | 120 Cap..... | 5285 |
| 51 | Betzold, Don (DFL)..... | 111 Cap..... | 2556 | 28 | Murphy, Steve (DFL)..... | 325 Cap..... | 4264 |
| 43 | Bonoff, Terri E. (DFL)..... | 325 Cap..... | 4314 | 25 | Neuville, Thomas M. (R)..... | 123 SOB..... | 1279 |
| 38 | Carlson, Jim (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 7-8073 | 17 | Olseen, Rick E. (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 5419 |
| 50 | Chaudhary, Satveer S. (DFL)..... | 205 Cap..... | 4334 | 33 | Olson, Gen (R)..... | 119 SOB..... | 1282 |
| 15 | Clark, Tarryl (DFL)..... | 208 Cap..... | 6455 | 4 | Olson, Mary A. (DFL)..... | 124 Cap..... | 4913 |
| 64 | Cohen, Richard J. (DFL)..... | 121 Cap..... | 5931 | 34 | Ortman, Julianne E. (R)..... | 125 SOB..... | 4837 |
| 26 | Day, Dick (R)..... | 113 SOB..... | 9457 | 65 | Pappas, Sandra L. (DFL)..... | 120 Cap..... | 1802 |
| 60 | Dibble, D. Scott (DFL)..... | 111 Cap..... | 4191 | 36 | Pariseau, Pat (R)..... | 117 SOB..... | 5252 |
| 18 | Dille, Steve (R)..... | 103 SOB..... | 4131 | 59 | Pogemiller, Lawrence J. (DFL)..... | 235 Cap..... | 7809 |
| 40 | Doll, John (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 5975 | 7 | Prettner Solon, Yvonne (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 4188 |
| 31 | Erickson Ropes, Sharon L. (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 5649 | 45 | Rest, Ann H. (DFL)..... | 205 Cap..... | 2889 |
| 14 | Fischbach, Michelle L. (R)..... | 153 SOB..... | 2084 | 35 | Robling, Claire A. (R)..... | 143 SOB..... | 4123 |
| 47 | Foley, Leo T. (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 4154 | 24 | Rosen, Julie A. (R)..... | 109 SOB..... | 5713 |
| 21 | Frederickson, Dennis R. (R)..... | 139 SOB..... | 8138 | 53 | Rummel, Sandy (DFL)..... | 323 Cap..... | 1253 |
| 37 | Gerlach, Chris (R)..... | 129 SOB..... | 4120 | 56 | Saltzman, Kathy L. (DFL)..... | 306 Cap..... | 4166 |
| 13 | Gimse, Joe (R)..... | 105 SOB..... | 3826 | 3 | Saxhaug, Tom (DFL)..... | 124 Cap..... | 4136 |
| 42 | Hann, David W. (R)..... | 127 SOB..... | 1749 | 46 | Scheid, Linda (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 8869 |
| 58 | Higgins, Linda (DFL)..... | 328 Cap..... | 9246 | 29 | Senjem, David H. (R)..... | 147 SOB..... | 3903 |
| 11 | Ingebrigtsen, Bill G. (R)..... | 132D SOB..... | 7-8063 | 23 | Sheran, Kathy (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 6153 |
| 49 | Johnson, Debbie J. (R)..... | 135 SOB..... | 3219 | 57 | Sieben, Katie (DFL)..... | 321 Cap..... | 7-8060 |
| 48 | Jungbauer, Michael J. (R)..... | 121 SOB..... | 3733 | 2 | Skoe, Rod (DFL)..... | 303 Cap..... | 4196 |
| 19 | Koch, Amy T. (R)..... | 115 SOB..... | 5981 | 10 | Skogen, Dan (DFL)..... | 303 Cap..... | 5655 |
| 12 | Koering, Paul E. (R)..... | 131 SOB..... | 4875 | 27 | Sparks, Dan (DFL)..... | 317 Cap..... | 9248 |
| 20 | Kubly, Gary W. (DFL)..... | 301 Cap..... | 5094 | 1 | Stumpf, LeRoy A. (DFL)..... | 208 Cap..... | 8660 |
| 9 | Langseth, Keith (DFL)..... | 122 Cap..... | 3205 | 5 | Tomassoni, David J. (DFL)..... | 317 Cap..... | 8017 |
| 63 | Larson, Dan (DFL)..... | 303 Cap..... | 7-8061 | 62 | Torres Ray, Patricia (DFL)..... | 124 Cap..... | 4274 |
| 44 | Latz, Ron (DFL)..... | 306 Cap..... | 7-8065 | 52 | Vandever, Ray (R)..... | 107 SOB..... | 4351 |
| 32 | Limmer, Warren (R)..... | 141 SOB..... | 2159 | 22 | Vickerman, Jim (DFL)..... | 226 Cap..... | 5650 |
| 8 | Lourey, Tony (DFL)..... | 205 Cap..... | 0293 | 16 | Wergin, Betsy L. (R)..... | 145 SOB..... | 8075 |
| 30 | Lynch, Ann (DFL)..... | G-24Cap..... | 4848 | 55 | Wiger, Charles W. (DFL)..... | 323 Cap..... | 6820 |
| 54 | Marty, John (DFL)..... | 328 Cap..... | 5645 | | | | |

*Capitol or State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155

Minnesota House and Senate

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota teachers

| | |
|--|----------|
| Number of teachers in state in 2006 | 55,237 |
| In 2003 | 56,142 |
| Percent of employed teachers who retired in 2006 | 2.5 |
| Average percent of teachers retiring in last five years | 2.3 |
| Licensure candidates prepared by Minnesota colleges and universities in 2006 | 5,169 |
| Number of undergraduate programs in which these people were enrolled | 70 |
| Number of graduate programs | 77 |
| Between 2002 and 2006, percent decrease in the number of teachers | |
| prepared outside Minnesota | 30 |
| Percent increase of teachers prepared in-state | 7 |
| Percent decrease in overall teachers granted initial teaching licenses | 8 |
| New teachers hired in Minnesota in 2001 | 2,728 |
| Percent who left their teaching assignment after one year | 26 |
| Percent who left after their second year | 13 |
| Percent teaching in the same district five years after being hired | 48 |
| Approximate percent of new teachers hired in 2000 who were still teaching | |
| five years after being hired in a Minnesota district | 69 |
| Temporary limited licenses granted by the Board of Teaching from 2002 to 2006 | |
| allowing someone to teach in subject content areas for which they may | |
| not be fully licensed when a school district has attempted, but is unable to | |
| hire a fully licensed teacher | 5,494 |
| Number of National Teachers of the Year to come from Minnesota since | |
| the program began in 1952 | 4 |
| State rank | 2 |
| Percentage of public school secondary teachers who majored in the core | |
| academic subjects they teach | 86 |
| U.S. average, as percent | 64 |
| Average Minnesota teacher salary in 2004-05 | \$46,906 |
| National average | \$47,808 |
| Wage growth, as percent, for average Minnesota wage earner in last 11 years | 49 |
| Average teacher wage growth, as percent | 28 |
| Student-teacher ratio in public K-12 schools in 2005 | 16:1 |

Sources: [Teacher Supply and Demand](#), [Department of Education](#), January 2007; [Council of Chief State School Officers](#); [Education Minnesota](#); [National Education Association](#).

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SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
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**RHYMING LINES
A WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT
STATE'S DRIVE TO EXCELLENCE**

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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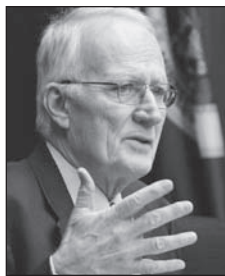
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On the cover: After testifying, Rashlin Robinson, takes a picture of the members of the House E-12 Education Committee and the House K-12 Finance Division while Qsashu Black, right, testifies about the LifeLine Youth Off Street Ministry, part of Community Justice Partners. Legislators took part in a joint hearing at the Glover-Suddeth Community Center in North Minneapolis Jan. 30. Raven Shambley, left, Starletta Leslie, back left and Lanza Freeman, the ministry's president and CEO, also came forward as the other testified.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Watershed trouble

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, managing water resources is complicated

By Nick Busse

"Swiss cheese" is how [Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) describes Minnesota's system of managing its water resources.

"We've got holes all over," Lanning said.

According to a new [report](#) from the Office of the Legislative Auditor, he's right — and the state's top water management watchdog, the [Board of Water and Soil Resources](#), is leaving more holes than it should.

Better known by its acronym, BWSR (informally pronounced "BOW-ser"), the board is responsible for supporting and overseeing watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts and other local entities that work to protect and improve the state's more than 13 million acres of lakes, streams and wetlands.

At least, that's what those organizations are supposed to do. Sometimes they don't, and that's when the board is supposed to step in. But according to Legislative Auditor James Nobles, the board has been neglecting its oversight duties.

"While some watershed management organizations are effective, some are not," Nobles said, adding that BWSR has been "too slow to act, and sometimes reluctant to get involved" when those organizations struggle or become inefficient.

Nobles presented the key findings of the watershed management report Jan. 25 to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, which took no immediate action.

Charging that BWSR is "controlled by local interests," Nobles recommended making its executive director appointed by, and

more directly accountable to, the governor, as well as expanding the board's oversight responsibilities and increasing its statutory powers.

"To meet the challenges of the future, we think BWSR's governing structure should be changed, and with that change we will have a stronger, more effective and more accountable watershed management system in Minnesota," Nobles said.

But in the course of his testimony, Nobles touched on the larger issue of watershed management in general — an inherently complicated undertaking involving some 14 state and federal agencies as well as 11 different types of local government organizations and nonprofits.

"There's a real mixed up and complicated system out there," Nobles said.

In fact, the biggest challenge in protecting, preserving and restoring water quality for the state's 11,842 lakes and 69,200 miles of rivers and streams might be simply bringing order to a system that some describe as chaotic.

The bigger picture

A watershed, defined by the [Department of Natural Resources](#) as "the total land area

from which water drains into a single stream or lake," serves as a kind of basic, fundamental unit for managing the state's water resources. The U.S. Geological Survey has identified 84 major watersheds in Minnesota, which it further breaks down into approximately 5,600 minor watersheds.

The responsibility for managing watersheds falls primarily to a complex, often overlapping and sometimes competing network of 46 watershed districts, 23 water management organizations, 91 soil and water conservation districts and 80 Greater Minnesota counties.

Don't even bother asking who does what; it's complicated. In fact, that's part of the problem.

"I think most of us who go in and, for example, vote for our soil and water conservation commissioner don't have any idea what we're voting for or what their responsibilities are," Nobles said.

Generally speaking, responsibilities associated with managing watersheds include monitoring and reducing pollution and preventing flooding. Somewhat ironically, watershed management largely involves governing land use practices, which often determine where water flows and what pollutants it picks up along the way. The trouble, according to BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke, is that every watershed is different and requires a relatively unique approach.

"There really is no one-size-fits-all approach," he said. "Each watershed, its issues and solutions require a customized application of policy and science."

First Reading continued on page 4

A lack of oversight

Whether citizens understand what their local watershed district or water management organization does is one issue; whether the people who run them do is another.

The report states that the performance of watershed organizations is “mixed,” with some successfully improving water quality and reducing the risk of floods while others flounder, struggling to implement basic management plans and “move beyond general administration and planning tasks.”

In fact, there is such a thing as a watershed horror story. [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), who showed up to the Jan. 25 meeting with a group of angry constituents in tow, described how the South Two River Watershed District collected some \$800,000 in taxes over a period of 20 years and did not have “even one project completed.”

The residents of that district eventually grew so frustrated that they petitioned BWSR to terminate the district altogether, which it did in August 2006. But Severson criticized

BWSR for not taking action earlier, even neglecting to make the district submit its annual report.

“In 20 years, they had submitted one report,” Severson said. “BWSR had the responsibility to make sure that those reports were filed; it didn’t happen.”

In another example cited in the report, the soil and water conservation district for Hennepin County, the Hennepin Conservation District, fell apart due to “internal turmoil,” with board members suing each other. The county withdrew its funding for the board in 2003, but BWSR continued doling out grants to the district even after it had become “essentially dismantled.”

Fixing BWSR

The recommendation to change BWSR’s governance structure so that its executive director would be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate became a point of some contention.

Randy Kramer, chairman of the board, refrained from commenting on many of the report’s specific findings, but did take

issue with the gubernatorial appointment recommendation.

“We, the board, feel that it’s essential that the Board of Water and Soil Resources hire the executive director,” Kramer said, adding that the board used a rigorous selection process for executive director candidates.

Some committee members were also skeptical of the recommendation. [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) wondered aloud whether BWSR’s problems were less an issue of governance than one of a lack of resources.

“It’s my opinion that BWSR has been drastically under-funded,” Ozment said, noting that the board was hit hard during recent budget shortfalls.

Nobles agreed that BWSR had limited resources, but disputed Ozment’s notion that funding was the primary problem.

“We think, just philosophically, that as an executive branch agency, that there ought to be more direct accountability to the governor and to the Legislature — not to a board that is dominated by local interests,” Nobles said.

Lanning, meanwhile, offered a larger perspective, arguing that the state needs a more comprehensive overall approach to watershed management.

“How are we going to get a handle on this with an approach that is hit-and-miss?” Lanning said. 🐼

“I think most of us who go in and, for example, vote for our soil and water conservation commissioner don’t have any idea what we’re voting for or what their responsibilities are.”

— Jim Nobles, Legislative Auditor

SPECIAL TEST



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

As Rep. Connie Ruth watches, Rep. Sondra Erickson holds up a giant No. 2 pencil to show the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division that she is prepared to take a specially developed Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment test during the division’s Jan. 29 hearing.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Jan. 24-Feb. 1 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

AGRICULTURE

Spending concerns

More money for research is on the legislative wish list for just about every group representing the state's commodities and producers.

Representatives for the state's various crop growers and livestock producers told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Jan. 30 they are concerned that state dollars allocated to the University of Minnesota for agriculture research will be shifted in the direction of emerging fuels. They say research dollars are needed to benefit all sectors of agriculture. No division action was taken.

As an example, Kenneth Asp, chairman of the Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotion Council, said that while the number of soybean and corn acres is on the rise, the number of acres devoted to wheat has been on the decline since the late-1990s. He said this differential can be attributed to the number of acres dedicated to produce crops used in the production of ethanol.

He said there is not enough wheat being grown to support research through the "check-off." This United States Department of Agriculture administered program refers to the collection of a fee for, in the case of commodities, every bushel sold and then given to a neutral body for specific uses.

"We need research to turn this trend around, or wheat will go the way of barley and oats, so that we're actually importing from other countries," Asp said.

Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the division, said last biennium's \$50 million annual appropriation to the university's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences had little legislative direction on how the money should be spent.

This year the division will take a closer look at the research appropriation, he said, and encouraged the various agriculture groups to offer suggestions on how these dollars should be allocated — whether for production agriculture, renewable energy or other emerging needs.

Licensing concerns

Without University of Minnesota research, neither the blueberry nor the grape would be able to thrive in this climate. Nor would there be a Haroldson or Honeycrisp apple.

Granting an exclusive license for a new university-developed apple variety, "MN 1914," to a single orchard, however, drew the attention of growers and the Legislature last year.

In response, a law was enacted requesting the university to refrain from implementing the "MN 1914" apple license. The law also called for a task force to review the university's licensing procedures and to report back to the Legislature.

The **Plant Licensing Task Force** report shows that the university has developed more than 800 plant varieties. Royalties from licensed varieties generate about \$1.5 million a year for the institution.

Beverly Durgan, director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station and chairwoman of the task force, told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 31 that plant varieties, such as an apple, take many years to develop, and that royalties help defray some of the costs.

"One of the reasons we have gone to licensing some of the varieties is then those royalties are used to sustain our breeding program," Durgan said. It also supplements funding from the state and commodity groups.

The Honeycrisp apple, last year named the state fruit, overall has generated \$4 million in royalties, Durgan said, adding that the patent goes off the apple in two years. She said there are high hopes that the "MN 1914" apple could produce double that amount in royalties.

She said several issues surfaced from task force discussions regarding licensing: the need for more communication with the agriculture community about variety release procedures; monitoring of exclusive releases to ensure the interests of the agricultural public are considered; consideration of funding challenges faced by the breeding program; and how to get a better return on investment.

The committee took no action.

BIOSCIENCES

More bucks for bioscience

A bill approved by a House committee Jan. 30 would provide money to fund a bioscience partnership between the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic.

Committees take to the road

The House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for setting spending targets in the House, is scheduled to hold a meeting at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 5 at Pilot Knob Elementary School, 1436 Lone Oak Road in Eagan.

The House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee is scheduled to meet at the Burnsville City Hall, 100 Civic Center Parkway, at 7 p.m. Feb. 7.

HF194, sponsored by **Rep. Kim Norton** (DFL-Rochester), would create an ongoing annual appropriation of \$15 million for the Minnesota Partnership for Biotechnology and Medical Genomics, a joint venture created in 2003 to help spur growth in the state's biotech industry. It was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee.

Mark Paller, assistant vice president for research at the university, said the partnership has two primary goals: to "improve life" and to stimulate the state's economy. Among its numerous projects: new drugs for cancer, research into neuromuscular diseases and early detection of cardiovascular disease.

"There is a lot of competition in the country and around the world for bioscience development," Paller said. "Both Mayo and the University of Minnesota have come to understand that we are stronger working together in this environment than we are separately and in competition."

Committee members argued over whether the \$15 million should be an ongoing appropriation or one-time money. **Rep. Mike Beard** (R-Shakopee) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have created a sunset date for the funding, arguing that ongoing appropriations put the state budget on "autopilot," which he said leads to budget crises.

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) disagreed, arguing ongoing funding would prove the state's commitment to bioscience and help "attract smart people" to the state.

"Above all, what our goal should be is to try to attract bright minds to Minnesota. That's going to be our future, and it sounds like ... this ongoing funding is a really critically important part of that," Thissen said.

Committee Chairman **Rep. Tim Mahoney** (DFL-St. Paul) urged committee members to think big on bioscience and its potential as an economic engine for the state.

"This state has started to have a small vision. My hope for this committee is that we

have a larger vision. ...This state should be investing millions in [bioscience].”

The bill now goes to the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. A companion, [SF176](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

BONDING

Cultural center word change

As a result of a one word omission in a bonding proposal last year, the Asian Pacific Cultural Center could not get immediate access to funds approved for its building project.

The Legislature approved \$400,000 for the center's design in last year's bonding law, but the word “pre-design” was not included in the original bill.

“This is just to make sure the cultural center has access to the money so they can move forward with the city,” [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the sponsor of [HF87](#), told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Jan. 30. Approved by the committee, the bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Naomi Chu, executive director of the center, said she was “surprised” the word “pre-design” was needed in the law. She added that no other wording would change, but the delay means the center's location will be different, and that the final price tag will likely change. Right now, the estimated cost of the center is \$6 million.

The 65,000 square-foot center will be located at the former Hamm's Brewery site on Minnehaha Avenue in St. Paul, instead of along the city's University Avenue. Four contiguous buildings will be retrofitted to create the center. Current plans call for the center to include a gallery and library center, a banquet room that will accommodate up to 500 people, a 265-seat theater designed for performing arts and cinematic viewing, the center's administrative office, a commercial kitchen, a gift shop, 15-20 offices for tenants and 15-20 classrooms.

A companion bill, [SF257](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Gubernatorial recommendations

Unless the state wants 1,200-pound granite panels falling from the [Department of Transportation](#) building, they will need to fix them this year.

This is one of several recommendations in the governor's proposed \$69.8 million [capital](#)

[budget](#) for 2007. Of the total, \$59.8 million would come from general obligation bonds, and \$10 million would be for user-financed bonding for the Rural Finance Authority.

The request comes on the heels of nearly \$1 billion capital budget laws in 2005 and 2006.

Typically, large bonding bills are done in the even-numbered years of a session, with a smaller bill passed in odd-number years for urgent projects.

Finance Commissioner Tom Hanson told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Jan. 30 that fencing surrounds spots of the building, restricting people from walking in areas at high risk of falling debris. The amount recommended for the repairs is \$11.8 million. The division took no action.

Other urgent projects include:

- \$37.9 million to pay half the cost of a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center;
- \$10 million in Rural Finance Authority loans;
- \$2.2 million to replace and re-insulate mold-infested ductwork at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Oak Park Heights and \$3.9 million to update the perimeter system at the facility;
- \$2.2 million to buy three available parcels next to the state-owned Stassen Building in St. Paul for parking;
- \$1.5 million to reduce the flow of clear water into the wastewater system at the Minnesota Zoo; and
- \$200,000 to construct Phase III of the Stillwater Flood Control project, to help protect the historic downtown from flooding.

Historic renovations

Historic roadside properties along the Great River Road could be improved with a nearly \$4.3 million appropriation spelled out in [HF146](#).

“This would provide funding for repair and restoration of the historic roadside properties, such as wayside rest areas, historical markers and important overlook sites along the Great River Road,” said [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill's sponsor.

Established in state law, the road runs along the Mississippi river from its headwaters in Itasca State Park to the Iowa border. It is part of a national scenic byway system running through several states.

The bill was approved Jan. 31 by the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Division. Johnson would like to see the bill laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus transportation

finance bill.

“We're working to protect the scenic, natural and historic resources along the Great River Road Corridor in order to protect those features that make the Great River Road a popular tourist destination for Minnesota,” said David Kelliher, legislative liaison for the Minnesota Historical Society.

“The era in which these resources were constructed is an important part of our state's history and our nation's history,” he said. “Many of these roadside features are on the National Register of Historic Places, and all those in the proposal are on the national register.” By statute, state agencies are responsible for protecting historic features.

Included in the proposal are 12 restoration projects, including the Camp Ripley entrance walls, the Fort Beauharnois Historical Marker near Lake Pepin and the La Crescent State Entry Marker. Many have crumbling rocks or concrete. It is estimated that the properties are deteriorating at 5 percent to 10 percent a year, while restoration costs increase by about the same percentage annually. Preliminary engineering reports and cost estimates for possible future restorations of 10 other sites would also be completed with the money.

A companion bill, [SF288](#), sponsored by [Senate Minority Leader David Jensen](#) (R-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

CONSUMERS

Social Security number usage

A Social Security number is needed to apply for a mortgage, credit card or long-term financing on a motor vehicle, and sometimes it is even asked for on a job application.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF131](#) would further restrict the use of Social Security numbers.

Approved Jan. 26 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, the bill next goes to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. It has no Senate companion.

“We believe very strongly that this bill goes a long way towards limiting the number of Social Security numbers that are floating out there that may ultimately result in identity theft,” said Mark Ireland, assistant attorney general in the office's [Consumer Division](#). More than 3,000 such thefts occurred in the state last year.

The bill is a clarification of a [2005 law](#), scheduled to take effect July 1, 2007, that in part restricts businesses from printing a Social Security number on a card needed to utilize the business's products or services, or put a

person's number on materials mailed to them. However, businesses that used the number in those ways before the law's effective date are to be exempt, if certain conditions are met. This bill would eliminate that provision.

It would also add two requirements that must be met before an individual would be required to transmit a Social Security number over the Internet; prohibit a person or non-government entity from disclosing an individual's Social Security number to a nonaffiliated third party; and a person or non-government entity could not "refuse to do business with an individual because he or she will not consent to the receipt by the person of his or her Social Security number, unless in connection with the transaction."

Among concerns expressed by business representatives were that, without access to the number, it could be harder to meet consumer needs, and it might make the identity theft problem worse by taking away a tool that prevents identification theft and fraud.

CRIME

Support needed for youth

When it comes to helping youth caught up in the juvenile court system, there are no easy answers.

Representatives from the judicial branch, law enforcement and the [Department of Corrections](#) spoke at the Jan. 30 meeting of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee about the difficulties faced in supporting youth in the juvenile court system. The committee took no action.

Ramsey County Judge Judith M. Tilsen said that in adult court, the objective is often to get people in, sentence them and move on. But in juvenile court, there is an effort made to touch the young person's life. "We want to talk to these kids," said Tilsen. "We want to tell them that they have to go to school, and that they have to follow the rules."

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) asked if there was anything that needed to be changed.

Although more resources are always a factor, there need to be more programs available to youth before they get involved in the system, said Tanya M. Bransford, a Hennepin County Juvenile Court judge. Resources such as after school programs and effective mental health services are critical, she said.

On behalf of the Minnesota Police Juvenile Unit, Lt. Bryan Schafer said that juveniles account for 17 percent of all arrests in Minneapolis, with young black men

accounting for 70 percent of that number. Of the 4,000 juvenile cases the department has, 11,000 youth are involved.

Police are working with schools to aggressively look for students who are truant and take them back to school. Getting youth back in class is a way to prevent them from committing other offenses, said Schafer.

Simeon Wagner, corrections unit supervisor for Hennepin County Juvenile Probation, said it can be frustrating trying to convince some kids of the importance of school. Providing youth an education is one of the most important things we can do, said Wagner. "How we get that done is another issue."

Prisoner reentry given priority

Prisoners released from Minnesota prisons need adequate support as they reenter the outside world.

This was the message to the House Public Safety Finance Division Jan. 31 from representatives of four different organizations. The division took no action.

Marcus Pope, associate director of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, spoke of the need to address domestic violence when prisoners reenter society. There needs to be an expansion of the approach to address all issues from the prison to the community, he said.

The institute advocates an action plan before and after offenders are released, including: protecting women who want to terminate relationships; ensuring the safety of intimate partners and children during the offender's incarceration and post-release; and preventing men from using children to manipulate and gather information about the other parent.

Fred LeFleur, senior department director with the Hennepin County Department of Corrections, spoke about STS (Sentence to Service) Homes Project, a program that provides inmates with training in construction so that they can gain employment once released.

There needs to be more focus on motivating inmates to get training, he said. "The inmates weren't employable when they went to prison, so the expectation that they will [be employable] after 36 to 48 months in prison is unrealistic."

Claudia Wasserman, director of workforce development services at the Wilder Foundation, spoke of her organization's efforts to help offenders enter the workforce.

The Wilder Foundation Job Club prepares clients for job interviews and teaches them how to win the confidence of potential employers.

The NetWork, led by Steve Nelson, is new a program that provides services, training and a positive environment to adult men who have a history of substance abuse, mental illness, chronic unemployment and incarceration.

EDUCATION

Arts center funding

What do stage and screen star Debbie Allen, music superstar Janet Jackson and the 1980s movie and TV show "Fame" have to do with Minnesota education?

Not much according to Pam Paulson, deputy director of the Perpich Center for Arts Education in Golden Valley. "We got a lot of comparisons to 'Fame' that didn't hold up," she told the House K-12 Finance Division Jan. 31.

La Guardia School of Performing Arts, featured in "Fame," had kids dancing and singing in the lunch room and not much education going on. However, Minnesota's center is a 310-student public school that teaches dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theater and visual arts, in addition to core subjects of English, math, science, social studies and world languages.

The center received nearly \$13.25 million in state money for the current biennium, which represents 88.4 percent of its budget, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty is requesting a 3.9 percent increase for the next two years. Other revenue sources include student fees, federal dollars, interest earnings and gifts.

However, the numbers are still down from levels a few years ago.

"Our budget was \$7.8 million, then it was cut to \$6.6 million. We're still trying to deal with the cuts," said Executive Director Nathan Davis.

"This school is like a diamond in Minnesota. How does the average student get to know the school is available? I didn't hear about 'til I came to the Legislature," said Rep. Denise Dittrich (DFL-Champlin).

"We send materials to every school, library, and all of the information is on the Web site; however, most of our students come by word-of-mouth," Paulson said.

The center also aims to improve K-12 education for all of Minnesota students and educators through innovative programs and partnerships centered in the arts. A development group provides access to research and best practices that promote teacher, artist and school effectiveness.

State academies funding

The Minnesota academies for the [deaf](#) and [blind](#) would receive a slight increase in funding under the governor's budget proposal.

The plan calls for approximately \$27.5 million in the 2008-09 biennium.

"We appreciate the extra 2 percent increase, but it probably will not be enough to cover our needs," said Linda Mitchell, superintendent of the academies near Faribault.

"Our students have the same problem as other children around the state, the only difference is that our student's ears just don't work," Mitchell told the House K-12 Finance Division Jan. 31. The division took no action.

Of the nearly \$1.1 million proposed increase in the governor's [budget](#), nearly \$600,000 is for employee compensation, \$200,000 is for installation and maintenance of a security system, \$182,000 is for technology upgrades and \$100,000 is to offset increases in the cost of the mainstreaming contract between the academies and Faribault Public Schools.

Coursework at both academies is designed to meet Minnesota's academic standards and graduation requirements. Curriculum is expanded to meet the unique educational needs of the students.

The academies have competitive sports teams that participate against other schools.

"It's great seeing blind kids out there wrestling, and having coached them it's an inspiration," said [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake).

Plus, many students are away from home, and stay in residence halls.

"At the residence halls is where a lot of the education comes from," said Olda Boubin, director of education at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind. He explained that many blind students have an adult aide with them in school, and have a difficult time making friends. "How many kids do you know who want to talk with a kid that has an adult by his side all day long," he said.

"If the student has the proper tools to learn, like Braille books, and the proper technology there is no holding back the student," he said.

EMPLOYMENT

Pay equity gap almost closed

Slowly, but surely, the pay equity gap between men and women who work for the state has closed.

Speaking before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs

Committee Jan. 31, Faith Zwemke, pay equity coordinator for the Department of Employee Relations, said, "The most amazing statistic in the world about the wage gap is that women who work for the state of Minnesota make 97 cents to the dollar that men make who work for the state of Minnesota."

The national average was 76.5 percent in 2004.

In 1982, women made 74 cents to every dollar men made. That year, Minnesota passed a pay equity law for state employees. A similar law was passed for city, county, school and other government employees two years later.

The purpose of these laws is "to eliminate sex-based pay disparity in public employees within the state," said Zwemke.

According to 2000 census data, Minnesota women have the highest labor force participation rate in the country and earn more than the national average, said Patty Tanji, representing the Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota.

Tanji also said that many women now employed by the government were once eligible for food stamps and other welfare. Pay equity raises have lifted families out of poverty.

The committee took no action.

ENERGY

Renewable energy standards

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) would set a more ambitious — and mandated — renewable energy standard for Minnesota.

[HF4](#) would gradually increase the percentage of the state's electricity that comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable energy sources to 11 percent by 2013, 15 percent by 2015 and 25 percent by 2020.

The House Energy Finance and Policy

EARLY CHILDHOOD CHOICE



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

During a Jan. 30 news conference, Michael Landsman, 2, plays with Legos as Rep. Nora Slawik, left, and Sen. Tarryl Clark discuss proposed early childhood legislation that would give parents more choice in education, and would invest in quality early childhood care and education.

Division held its first of three scheduled hearings on the bill Jan. 31. It took no action.

Whereas previous legislation required only a "good faith" effort, the new standards would be legally binding for all of the state's power companies.

"We have the responsibility, I believe, to my generation and those to follow, to take aggressive positions on technologies that are doable, that have been done, and can be done aggressively and prudently without disrupting the market," Peterson said.

The bill includes a provision for a flexible renewable energy credit system, whereby companies that cannot meet renewable standards can purchase credits from companies that exceed the standards.

John Dunlop, senior outreach representative for the American Wind Energy Association,

said that contrary to popular belief, higher renewable energy standards actually result in lower electricity prices by inviting new companies into the market and creating competition.

"If you establish a standard, it really invites competition, and that competition tends to keep the prices down," Dunlop said.

Its companion, [SF4](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Global warming presentation

Polar explorer Will Steger told members of eight different House and Senate committees Jan. 30 that the effects of global warming are indisputable — that he has seen them with his own eyes during decades of expeditions to the north and south poles.

"The scientists have predicted some of these changes; very few people have seen them," he said.

Steger was among several speakers invited to brief lawmakers on global warming as a primer for future legislative action on the issue. He presented a slideshow of pictures and satellite photographs that show what he said were some effects of global warming: disintegrating ice shelves, melting glaciers, starving polar bear populations and endangered native cultures. He warned that the rapid melting of the polar ice cap would have dire consequences for the Earth's climate, with one of the most obvious effects being an increase in violent storms.

He urged legislators to do their part in the fight against global climate change.

"We can't wait on this," he said.

David Tilman, regents' professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Minnesota, said global warming is now regarded as fact by the vast majority of scientists and many people in the business community. He pinned the blame squarely on a dramatic increase in global carbon emissions relative to the last 400,000 years of life on Earth, creating a situation that is "totally unprecedented" in world history.

Lucinda Johnson, a researcher at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, described some of the likely effects of global warming on Minnesota's environment: longer, hotter summers; an increase in droughts, punctuated by more frequent flooding; increased weed and algal growth in lakes; declining populations among certain fish species; reduced appetite and weight gain in livestock; and an increase

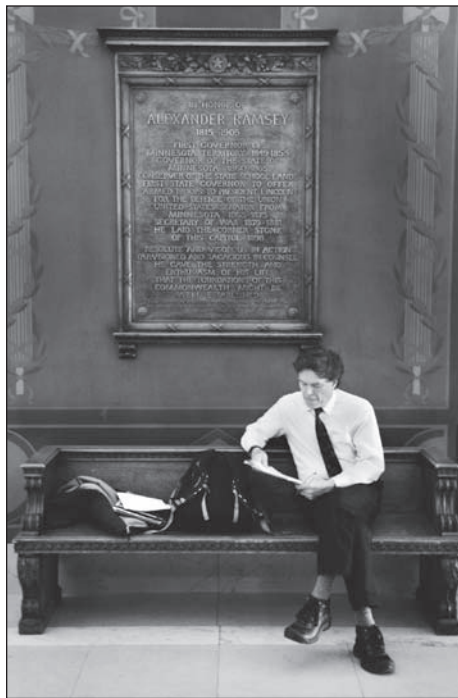


PHOTO BY TOM OLSMSCHIED

Sitting on a State Capitol bench, arctic explorer Will Steger reviews his notes before speaking to a joint House and Senate informal meeting on global warming Jan. 30 in the House Chamber.

in disease vectors like mosquitoes that can carry West Nile virus.

[House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the Legislature has an obligation to help stop global warming by taking the lead on new policies that would reduce its impacts.

"As a mom, I know that if we leave this work to our children, it may be too late," Kelliher said. "Just as the world is no longer flat ... the fact of global warming can no longer be ignored."

Great Lakes compact passed

Minnesota could become the first state to sign a Great Lakes water usage compact more than six years in the making, if a bill passed Feb. 1 by the House becomes law.

[HF110](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), would enact the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a proposed agreement between eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces that would prohibit diversion of water outside of the Great Lakes basins. Such diversions can have significant environmental and economic impacts.

The compact is the result of years of negotiations through the Council of Great Lakes Governors, a nonpartisan partnership between the eight Great Lakes states — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. To

become effective, it must be signed into law by the governors of all eight states, ratified by the U.S. Congress, and then agreed to by the Canadian authorities.

The compact also establishes that the U.S. states and Canadian provinces involved would implement conservation and efficiency programs, and use consistent standards to evaluate the environmental and economic impacts of proposed uses of Great Lakes water.

Several House members expressed concern that signing the compact would be giving up the state's right to set its own water use policies, as well as granting taxation authority to a government entity over which the Legislature has no oversight.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have prevented the council from levying any sort of tax increase.

Huntley, noting that [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) supports the compact, said that due to its nature, any amendment would effectively kill it.

[Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) spoke at length against the compact, arguing that to pass it would take power away from the state, and put it in the hands of an international entity.

Passed 97-35 by the House, the bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope) is the sponsor.

Trust fund recommendations

A bill approved by a House division would appropriate more than \$23 million from the state's environmental trust funds for 29 different projects relating to land, water and air protection.

[HF293](#), sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover), represents the recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#). The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division approved the bill, which now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

The purpose of the LCCMR, formerly the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, is to make recommendations to the Legislature on how to use money from the state's environmental trust funds — primarily, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives its money mostly from lottery proceeds.

"This was the first process that we went through with the newly formed LCCMR," said Tingelstad, who co-chairs the commission.

Briefly summarized, the bill includes:

- \$12.3 million for land acquisition, for an estimated total of 17,000 acres, to protect for-

- ests, wetlands and other natural habitats;
- \$4.1 million for biological surveys and data collection of natural resources;
- \$2.9 million for various research projects;
- \$2.5 million for land restoration of an estimated 4,000 acres, including vegetation restoration and research into biological controls for invasive species; and
- \$1.3 million for administrative costs.

The current recommendations would apply to Fiscal Year 2008; a second set of recommendations will be presented for Fiscal Year 2009.

A provision relating to forest legacy easements stirred debate among division members, some of whom expressed frustration that the state was putting money into private lands whose owners deny access to the public.

Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji) said many private landowners are taking advantage of state forest protection incentives without giving anything back.

“Not only do we not have recreation access guaranteed, but these large investment houses that own this property are in fact leasing out that recreation access to others, but still getting lower tax status,” Moe said.

FAMILY

Sick leave usage

As our society gets older, so does the number of parents who need to be cared for by their sons and daughters.

But sometimes doing so means the child has to choose between providing care for a parent and collecting a paycheck.

Such was the case of Karen Eileen, a member of AARP’s Grassroots, Education and Advocacy Team.

“When my mother needed care and help, my choice was clear. There would always be another job, but I only had one mother,” she told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Jan. 31. “We should all be able to give that kind of care to our loved ones.”

Sponsored by **Rep. Neva Walker** (DFL-Mpls), **HF219** could allow that.

Approved by the division and referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the bill, which has no Senate companion, would expand the use of sick leave benefits “for absences due to the illness of or injury to the employee’s child, spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent, or stepparent.” Under current law, the use of sick leave benefits is only for the care of an injured or sick child.

“This would be especially beneficial to those

of us that have parents who are aging,” Walker said. “My son is precious to me. However, my mother is just as precious to me.”

Eileen said that unpaid family members provide 80 percent to 90 percent of the long-term care provided in society. “Working caregivers perform a nearly impossible balancing act. Caregivers feel guilty about neglecting both sides of their lives, even as they are exhausting themselves trying to keep up,” she said.

The bill would apply to employers with at least 21 employees at a site. To be eligible, an employee must have been employed at least half-time by the employer for 12 consecutive months.

While having no issue with the expansion, **Rep. Carol McFarlane** (R-White Bear Lake) is concerned with the cost of lost productivity of a missing employee.

“Our rules are going to have to adjust to the flow of the baby boomers,” said **Rep. Larry Haws** (DFL-St. Cloud). “You’d think most companies would be doing it naturally, and we wouldn’t need a law.”

GAME & FISH

Invasive species resolution

A bill approved by a House division Jan. 29 would urge Congress to take action to stop the spread of invasive aquatic species into the Great Lakes and other waters.

HF74, sponsored by **Rep. Rick Hansen** (DFL-South St. Paul), would urge Congress to enact federal legislation requiring all international ships to disinfect and sterilize their ballast water — a frequently cited means of spreading exotic species — prior to discharging it into U.S. rivers and lakes.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill, which now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. A companion, **SF65**, sponsored by **Sen. Katie Sieben** (DFL-Newport), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

Hansen said the bill especially targets microorganisms such as the viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) fish-killing virus that has been found in lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario.

“The urgency now is that we may be moving into the pathogen area,” Hansen said.

Gary Botzek, executive director of the Minnesota Conservation Federation, explained that previous federal legislation, which required such ships to discharge their ballast water on land or at least 200 miles from shore, failed to stem the proliferation

of invasive aquatic species.

Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake), division chairman, elaborated on Botzek’s comments, explaining that the invasive species tend to cling to the inside of the ballast tanks.

Steve Hirsch, assistant director of the Department of Natural Resources’ **Ecological Services Division**, said that ballast water has become a “major vector” for the introduction of invasive aquatic species to Minnesota, citing zebra mussels, New Zealand mudsnails and round gobies as three examples.

“It is a very difficult problem to address,” Hirsch said.

GOVERNMENT

Going back in time

Few people get the chance to see where and how history is preserved at the Minnesota History Center, but the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division did Jan. 29.

Nina Archabal, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, and several of her staff members, guided representatives through the center’s restricted areas. There they saw conservation labs used to preserve objects; the storage area that holds the center’s three-dimensional collections that include objects like shoes, clothing and furniture; and the archive room.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Members of the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division enter one of the storage facilities at the Minnesota History Center during a Jan. 29 tour. This storage space holds county and state records before they are microfilmed and then destroyed.

The archive room is filled with boxes from floor to ceiling. The vice presidential papers of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale are included in the mix. Of all the boxes, 12,000 square feet, which equals 12,000 boxes of history, are just from railroad magnet James J. Hill, Archabal said. The room is so organized that employees can take a forklift and find specific boxes immediately.

The textile conservation lab was also on the tour. (This is open once a month for public tours.)

One of Textile Conservator Ann Frisina's jobs is to re-create original fabrics of various time periods. She uses a stereoscope, a device that serves as a camera and microscope, to take enlarged pictures of fabric fragments so she can see the patterns.

Though the history of long-time Minnesotans is prevalent at the center, the history of new immigrants to the state is becoming larger.

Bob Horton, the center's library director, said history is being made now with the influx of Somalian, Cambodian, Hmong and others to the state. Because of this, several educators want to teach cultural literacy to students. Horton said the center is trying to digitize that cultural information so teachers can access it over the Internet.

Training for legislators

A plan to spend \$20,000 in the next fiscal year for legislator training failed to get past the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 1.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tinglestad](#) (R-Andover), [HF13](#), rejected on a voice vote, would allow the [Legislative Coordinating Commission](#) to oversee yearly training forums for both House and Senate members.

Under the bill, the forums would include training to improve legislative skills in running effective meetings and provide opportunities for legislators and invited executive officials to interact.

State agencies pay for public employee training and legislators are also employees of the state, Tinglestad said. "Education is an important part of what we do here."

In addition to appropriated state money, the bill would authorize donations from foundations, corporations and individuals to help defray costs and would to be published on the [Legislature's Web site](#), but registered lobbyists or principals would be forbidden.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) said if legislators find the training beneficial, they would be willing to pay for it themselves and suggested a fee for participation.

Tinglestad said adding a fee might detract

participants and create difficulties in budgeting for a conference ahead of time. Also, she said charging legislators might set a precedent among state agencies to charge their own employees for job training.

A companion bill, [SF130](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Departments respond to report

Representatives from the [Department of Corrections](#) responded Jan. 30 to a substance abuse treatment [report](#) from the Office of the Legislative Auditor that was presented to members of the House Public Safety Finance Division five days earlier. No action was taken.

In part, the February 2006 report recommends more permanent beds for inmates in need of treatment, and coordination with local agencies to improve post-release substance abuse plans.

Nanette Larson, director of the department's health services unit, said that following the report's recommendations, progress has been made in several areas. There is better sharing of information with other agencies; there is a move away from short-term treatment to long-term treatment; there are more after-care treatment opportunities, including work with community-based organizations; and there are more treatment beds.

Committee members asked how the department would be able to increase the opportunities for chemical dependency treatment to more inmates. Deputy Commissioner Dennis Benson pointed out that the situation is more complicated than just providing primary care.

Despite an 83 percent increase in the prison population during the last 10 years, funding not keeping pace, and the need for more trained, certified staff, Benson said the department is methodically moving forward.

Benson also said the attention to aftercare is what will make a difference in offender re-entry to the outside world, and in their ability to live a sober life.

The department encourages inmates to participate in treatment by letting them know that if they complete the program, time will be taken off their sentence.

The report also suggests that the [Department of Human Services](#), responsible for the publicly funded programs, should have stronger leadership and more oversight

of the programs, and that the department should monitor local assessment and referral practices.

Deborah Moses, operations manager with the department, said Jan. 25 it is in the process of improving materials on assessments and will work to provide progress reports to the Legislature.

Parity for nursing homes

A bill to level reimbursement rates for nursing homes statewide will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus health and human services finance bill.

While presenting [HF55](#) to the House Health and Human Services Finance Division Jan. 31, [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), the bill's sponsor, called it "probably the most important thing we can do this legislation session."

For almost 20 years, nursing homes have been reimbursed for services provided to Medical Assistance patients on a tiered system based on the facilities' annual projections, the level of services provided to patients and geographic region. The bill would increase payment rates from the state for operating costs of facilities in geographic groups I and II, which are located in less heavily populated regions of Minnesota. Nursing home facilities in those groups would be reimbursed at geographic group III's median rate, the highest rate available.

The total cost, according to Sviggum, would be \$22 million the first year and \$33 million annually beyond.

The proposal was heavily endorsed by testifiers, many of whom are nursing home administrators from small towns.

"If this bill is not passed, we will be forced to make deeper cuts to our direct care and our programs," said Jeff King, chief financial officer of Three Links Care Center in Northfield.

King said the center has been operating at a net loss for more than three years and his facility, at a salary level, can't effectively compete with other health care providers.

"The sad part of it is that we don't really have an unusual story," said John Boughton administrator of Kenyon Sunset Home. Boughton shared several stories of employees who left or candidates who refused a job because of pay scale and benefits. If the bill passes, his reimbursement rate would increase by \$350,000.

A companion bill, [SF139](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Seeking assistance

As impending federal cuts loom over the [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#), the House Health and Human Services Committee heard Jan. 25 from those most likely to suffer the consequences — program recipients and frontline workers.

Testifiers spoke of struggles with domestic abuse, early pregnancy, disability, homelessness, depression, program mandates, job searches and society. No action was taken.

Mary Randow, who finished her bachelor's degree and earned her teaching certificate while participating in MFIP, said she entered the program after leaving an abusive husband while she was pregnant with her second child.

"I don't know what I would have done without the MFIP program," she said. "I never knew I could live on so little, but it was all I needed to be safe and secure."

MFIP offers a variety of services, including supplemental cash and food money, and is often received in tandem with other governmental assistance. It is funded through the state's General Fund and federal dollars.

In 2006, Congress passed the "Deficit Reduction Act of 2005," which in part, restricts how work activities are defined, increases the proportion of those required to work, complicates monitoring procedures and redefines a formula used by state welfare programs to calculate work participation rates. Minnesota could expect as much as \$13 million in penalties annually if it doesn't meet the new requirements.

Like Randow, many of those who spoke sought further education and training while receiving assistance. They said education was their ticket to sustainability.

"The education is what we really need to be able to have a successful career," said Brenda Townsell, a mother of five.

Of their complaints, the most common was the program's work requirements, implemented in 1996, which force recipients to work, or look for work, a certain number of hours each week.

"In March 2005, I was forced to work for free for over five months in order to receive my MFIP grant of \$387 a month," said Virginia Weldon, a mother of one, who has spinal problems that make it difficult to find and keep employment. "I was forced to work 33.75 hours per week ... (really), I was only making \$2.87 an hour."

Recipients who do not meet work requirements are sanctioned and can lose portions of their assistance.

A prescription for health care

Members of the Health and Human Services Committee received a six-step

"prescription" Jan. 30 to help "truly transform health care."

Peter Hutchinson and Maureen Reed, the Independence Party gubernatorial ticket last fall, estimated the package, which they argued must be implemented in full to be effective, would save the state approximately \$1.7 billion annually, while requiring a \$500 million to \$600 million investment for a universal, state-sponsored health care program.

Hutchinson and Reed proposed that the state cut the cost of administration and bureaucracy through several means by 2010; improve quality of care and reduce cost by concentrating on chronic disease, demographic disparities and preventative care by 2010; provide incentives to people who "take greater responsibility" for their health decisions; provide public access to costs and services for health care providers statewide; and implement public measures, such as a statewide smoking ban, to reduce contemporary health epidemics.

No action was taken on the proposal.

"I'm pretty sure we're going to spend all session getting a second opinion on your proposal," said Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague). "But I do like a lot of the ideas you have on the table."

Hutchinson and Reed's presentation

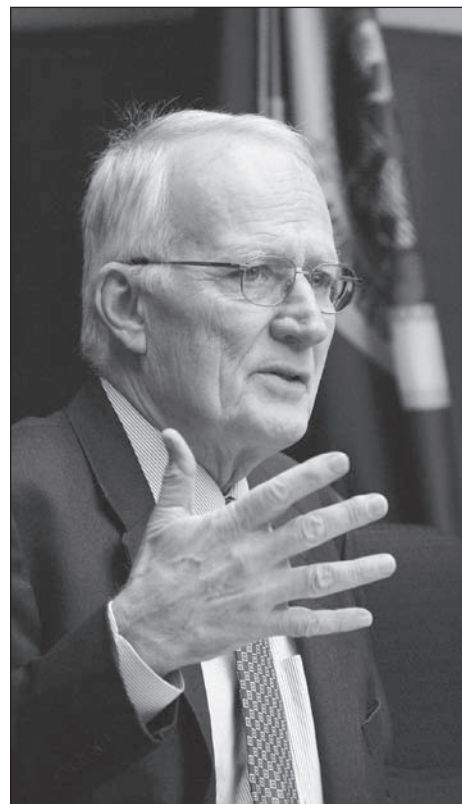


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Former U.S. Sen. Dave Durenberger, now a senior health policy fellow at the University of St. Thomas, gives an overview on health care policy to the House Health and Human Services Committee Jan. 30.

followed an appearance by former U.S. Sen. Dave Durenberger, who now serves as senior health policy fellow at the University of St. Thomas. He provided a dismal analysis of the U.S. health care system. "A lot of people who are blind to what's going on believe the U.S. has the best health care system in the world," he said, while offering seven principles to guide discussion forward. Some mirrored Hutchinson and Reed's so-called health care "prescription," including providing incentives for healthy personal practices and fully disclosing cost and quality. Durenberger also said that legislators should put Minnesotans "in the driver's seat" on health care decisions.

"Trust us to know how to use information," he said. "We, together, will reduce the cost of the health care system."

HIGHER EDUCATION

Who'll teach the nurses?

It is widely known that a nursing shortage exists. Less known, but as equally alarming, is the reduction in the number of instructors needed to educate future nurses.

"We will need well-prepared faculty if we are going to educate these nurses that are needed," Kelli Smith, a nurse educator at Anoka-Ramsey Community College and a member of the Minnesota Nurses Association Commission on Education, told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Jan. 30.

Although the division took no action, [Rep. Kathy Brynaert](#) (DFL-Mankato), said, "It'll be our challenge to see if we can accept your challenge to meet the issues."

Smith said many state colleges have responded with a quantity over quality plan of increasing the number of program slots without adding faculty or additional resources.

Workload and salary are two of the most oft-mentioned reasons that nursing instructors leave their posts.

"The nursing curriculum is constantly changing and must be updated, making preparation to teach time consuming and labor intensive," Smith said. "Nursing educators must also maintain clinical competence."

At Minnesota State University, Mankato, 33 full-time nursing equivalents are being filled by 17 full-time faculty members, of which 11 hold doctoral degrees, said Sonja Meiers, an associate professor and graduate programs coordinator in the university's School of Nursing.

She said nurse educators can live in an

“unfortunate paradox” where more education can lead to less salary.

“In a recent survey of our graduates, we discovered that the average salary for a baccalaureate graduate after one year of experience is \$49,000. The average salary for a nurse practitioner in specialty care is \$74,000. The starting salary for a master’s prepared assistant professor nurse educator is about \$40,000 to \$45,000, depending on years of experience.”

At MSU, Mankato, they are recruiting for nine open positions, but are competing against schools that can offer more perks. For example, a Vermont school offered a candidate \$10,000 in loan forgiveness and relocation expenses.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The right to transfer

Committee approval was given to a bill that would dissolve a governmental unit and transfer its belongings to a city.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), [HF180](#) would dissolve the Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency, and transfer its assets and liabilities to the Hibbing Economic Development Authority, which offers development assistance for new and expansion-minded businesses interested in locating in Hibbing.

By law, redevelopment agencies have no authority to dissolve.

Approved Jan. 31 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, it was sent to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

An amendment was successfully proposed that would allow the governing body of any municipality to dissolve a local agency and transfer its assets and liabilities. This would eliminate the need for a new statute to be drafted every time an agency is dissolved.

A companion bill, [SF54](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

METRO AFFAIRS

The green bus

Metro Transit, the bus service serving much of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, is trying to make its bus exhaust fumes more environmentally friendly.

“We are the largest user of fuel in the state of Minnesota, so we take environmental issues quite seriously,” Peter Bell,

Metropolitan Council chairman, told the [House Transportation Finance Division](#) Jan. 25. No action was taken.

The system now uses ultra-low sulfur fuel, instead of just low sulfur fuel; since July 2006 it has used 5 percent biodiesel in its buses; and it is testing a fuel that is 20 percent biodiesel.

Currently the system operates three hybrid buses, and Bell said the intent is to purchase 150 more by 2011.

Doing so would likely be more expensive. A 40-foot hybrid bus now has a price tag of about \$500,000, but he expects the cost to decrease with improved technology. The current diesel buses cost about \$315,000.

However, Bell noted that Metro Transit would use 19,682 fewer gallons of diesel fuel over the 12-year lifespan of a hybrid bus. “The cost savings of the diesel doesn’t make up for the \$185,000 difference,” he said. “But who knows what will happen to the price of fuel.”

In addition to running more quietly, Bell said hybrid buses should emit 91 percent less particulate matter, mainly soot, and 85 percent less nitrogen oxide.

Other changes to the current fleet have reduced particulate matter emissions from 85 tons per year in 1995 to a projected 12.8 tons this year and 8 tons by 2011.

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

SAFETY

Child safety restraints

State law states that 4-year-old Abbie Swanson of Lakeville no longer needs to be in a child passenger restraint system that meets federal standards.

However, a bill sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) would require that Abbie be in such a system until her eighth birthday.

Approved by the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee Jan. 31, [HF105](#) next goes to the House Transportation Finance Division.

Gail Weinholzer, director of public affairs for AAA Minnesota/Iowa, said that 13 Minnesotans between ages 4-10 were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2005, and almost 1,200 were seriously injured.

She said the solution offered in this bill is quite easy to enact.

“We’d like to see state statute reflect best practice of 2007, versus best practice of 1982, which was when this statute was originally enacted,” she said. “Our current statute does a disservice to children ages 4-8.”

Plus, an adult seat belt on a 4-year-old could do more damage than good.

According to the Minnesota Emergency Nurses Association, “An improper fit of an adult safety belt can cause the lap belt to ride up over the stomach and the shoulder belt to cut across the neck, potentially exposing the child to serious abdominal or neck injury.” Additionally, if the shoulder strap portion of the lap/shoulder



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

With the assistance of Dakota County Deputy Sheriff Char Rayl, 4-year-old Abbie Swanson of Lakeville demonstrates to the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee the proper use of a child restraint Jan. 31. Rep. Melissa Hortman, back, is sponsoring a bill that would require passenger restraint for children under age 8 in motor vehicles.

belt is uncomfortable, children will likely place it behind their backs, defeating the safety benefits of the system.

For violating current statute, the driver is assessed a \$50 fine that can be waived if, within 14 days, they produce evidence that a child passenger restraint system has been obtained. The bill requires the fine be waived.

"I don't want this to be a punitive bill. I'd rather it be an educational bill," Hortman said.

Weinholzer said the average car seat costs \$50-\$75, and a booster seat can be had for \$13. Many agencies provide free seats for low-income families.

A companion bill, **SF122**, sponsored by **Sen. Jim Carlson** (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

TAXES

Governor signs tax conformity

Signed
by
the
governor

Thousands of Minnesotans will benefit from tax credits for 2006 now that **Gov. Tim Pawlenty** has signed the first bill of the session.

Sponsored by **Rep. Sandy Wollschlager** (DFL-Cannon Falls) and **Sen. Thomas Bakk** (DFL-Cook), the law conforms Minnesota's income tax to federal income tax changes enacted since the 2006 Legislature adjourned.

The changes will increase the tuition expense deduction up to \$4,000 and the teacher classroom expense deduction up to \$250; allow military personnel to count tax-exempt combat pay as earned income for the purpose of qualifying to make tax-deductible contributions to IRAs; and allow people, at least age 70½, to make direct charitable contributions from an IRA to a charity.

The law, most of which is effective Jan. 31, 2007 will affect 2006 income tax returns only.

Quick action was needed because residents, if they haven't done so already, will be preparing 2006 tax returns soon. Those that have filed their income taxes and qualify for these middle-income federal tax credits will have to file an amended tax return.

HF8*/SF17/CH1

Tax exemption concerns

One part of a bill that mirrors the governor's tax budget proposal was not exactly received warmly Jan. 29 by the House Taxes Committee.

Sponsored by **Rep. Dean Simpson** (R-New York Mills), **HF304** provides budget reserves,

modified property tax and levy provisions, federal tax conformity, military income and pension exclusions and specified sales tax exemptions.

Arguably, the most controversial part of the bill gives Thomson West, a legal information solutions company in Eagan, a sales tax exemption for a possible expansion.

Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center) asked if it is typical for the state to give a tax exemption to just one company, and wanted to know why this company was chosen.

"Is this the only request (the governor) got?" she asked. "How did he make the decision that this should be in his budget and no one else was?"

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said that as far as he knows, Thomson West was the only company to request this exemption. He added that Minnesota had to become more competitive or risk losing the company to another state. He compared this plan to the Job Opportunity Building Zones program.

Hilstrom said the Mall of America was looking for a sales tax exemption and wanted to know why it wasn't considered. Einess said the Mall of America was looking for a long-term exemption, which is different from Thomson West's short-term request.

Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls) found it "interesting" that the commissioner was comparing the Thomson West request to JOBZ, which provides tax relief to companies in needy areas and was targeted to manufacturing businesses in Greater Minnesota. He added that the highest unemployment in the state is in north Minneapolis, the next highest is in south Minneapolis, and the third, he believes, is St. Paul.

"The governor's office fought strongly against any kind of a JOBZ, whatsoever, that would help businesses produce jobs in north Minneapolis," Mullery said. "Now we're going to do that for an area of Eagan, Apple Valley, etc., which is not exactly thought of as one of the neediest areas of the state."

A companion bill, **SF293**, sponsored by **Sen. Julianne Ortman** (R-Chanhassen), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

Property tax hot line

Anyone with an opinion about rising property taxes or, better yet, have a solution to this hot-button issue? Legislators want to hear from you.

The **House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division** has created a comment line and Web site designed to provide an avenue for taxpayers to have a say in how the House addresses rapidly rising property taxes.

"This will allow folks back home to have

input from the kitchen table to the committee table," said **Rep. Paul Marquart** (DFL-Dilworth), the division chairman.

The hot line started on Jan. 29, and by the next morning, 53 e-mails and 21 calls had been tallied.

"I've been encouraged," Marquart said. "It's going to put us in better communication with the public."

At the end of February, the division will pick ideas for inclusion in a citizens' omnibus property tax relief bill. Citizens whose ideas are picked will have the opportunity to testify to the division. Marquart said he has never heard of a citizens' bill being proposed. Through the next few weeks, he will give updates on ideas being generated from the hot line.

"The strength of the work done in the property tax division is going to come from public input," he said.

The hot line will be open the whole session, but Marquart said a property tax report has to be completed by mid-March.

Comments can be accepted at (651) 297-8131, (800) 551-5520 or www.house.mn/df/ptax/propertytaxproject.html.

Performance-based measurements

The House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee was shown a Web-based option for tracking the quality of health care facilities Jan. 30.

A performance measurement software currently being used in more than 200 sites in 15 states was described to members by Paul Rengstorf, president of cPMT, Inc. The Minnesota corporation created a design and measurement tool to monitor the progress of various aspects of operating a health care facility, such as employee turnover, customer satisfaction and internal operating efficiencies.

Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, said the presentation came about because of a **2006 gubernatorial initiative**, in which **Gov. Tim Pawlenty** called for investing in the state's mental health infrastructure.

Where to find information House Public Information Services

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

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

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the House's Web page. To connect, point your Web browser at: www.house.mn

Saving state dollars

Consolidating services is part of “Drive to Excellence”

By PATTY OSTBERG

Instead of trekking out in below zero weather to get license tabs for a car that might start on a brisk morning, Minnesotans can now sit in their pajamas at home and perform the task online.

This is precisely the type of government service the governor’s “Drive to Excellence” campaign intends to provide constituents.

The campaign will create speedy delivery of government services, Department of Administration Commissioner Dana Badgerow told the House State Government Finance Division Jan. 25.

Restructure and retool

In conjunction with more demand, a demographic issue is facing the state government’s workforce. By 2010, one in four state employees is scheduled to be eligible to retire; by 2015 the number is projected to be 50 percent, she said.

Now is the perfect opportunity to restructure and retool the way we serve constituents so that it can be more automated and done with more productivity, she said. “We have to stop replicating all of these functions agency by agency” and doing it differently and inefficiently in most departments, she said.

The [Office of Enterprise Technology](#), one of the initial campaign initiatives, is to create technology efficiencies among agencies. The office is also scheduled to oversee the creation of an information security program for which the governor budgeted \$17 million for in his 2008-09 biennial recommendations.

Essentially the technology security would allow people to rest more easily when paying online, knowing their personal payment information would be tightly secured.

Chief Information Officer Gopal Khanna said other future changes include more e-services by governmental agencies, consolidating information technology programs and modernizing business applications.

An additional \$13 million in the governor’s budget would be used to streamline, upgrade



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Gopal Khanna, state chief information officer, gives an overview of the Office of Enterprise Technology to the House State Government Finance Division Jan. 25.

and manage state technology to jump-start the consolidation of Internet technology resources.

Licensing efficiency

One early success of the program was the Dec. 15 debut of the “[License Minnesota](#)” Web site, where constituents can find licensing information by activity, agency or key word search. The collaboration includes information for 673 license types for businesses, professional, vehicle and recreational purposes administered by more than 40 state agencies.

According to the site, “The portal eliminates the need for citizens, professionals and business operators to know — or at least make an educated guess about — which state agency administers what license. Users can view information, and in many cases, connect directly to Web-based license applications.”

The next step in the “excellence” campaign is

to make purchasing a license available online.

Another initiative was [consolidating state construction codes](#) and licensing to create a consistent response from state government. Before the reorganization, the construction industry was regulated by six different state agencies.

The Construction Codes and Licensing Division consolidated five areas: Building Codes and Standards Division of the Department of Administration, Plumbing and Engineering unit of the Department of Health, Board of Electricity, Residential Contractors’ Licensing unit of the Department of Commerce, and Boiler and High-pressure Piping of the Department of Labor and Industry.

Through strategic sourcing or buying commodities as a state, entities such as K-12 and higher education have been using a new system to purchase computer hardware, saving upward of 44 percent, Badgerow said.

State agencies now work cooperatively on contracts and source high volume items collectively, saving the state money.

For example, Badgerow said when she came to state government she was given a choice of 48 options for a cell phone. Now most state employees have only one choice, which has resulted in more than \$1 million in savings, she said. Similar programs now include desktop computers, laptops, monitors and office chairs.

Another future initiative funded by \$6.7 million in the governor’s budget is to create a system to track state building inventory, Badgerow said. The state owns more than 5,000 buildings and has more than 800 commercial leases, but there is no single database with information on the status, condition or occupancy of the buildings.

Because 22 “custodial” agencies manage the thousands of buildings, if an agency is looking for space in a specific area, it would be difficult to find unused state-owned space already paid for, Badgerow said. This database would create a centralized location to help prioritize funding asset preservation and track the state’s real property.

Other funding projects include: a grants management office to better track the \$1 billion in grant money now appropriated to more than 7,000 grantees; a new accounting and procurement system; and an informational system to track the state’s fleet of more than 8,000 vehicles. 🚗

Rap, verse and the spoken word

State needs a poet 'free to write rhyming lines'

By CRAIG GREEN

The language of bills presented in the House isn't poetic. By design, bills include definitions, legal terms, statute citations and subdivisions — all to support the document's main points.

But HF224 is different.

Sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), the bill proposes the creation of the position of state poet laureate and the language of the bill reflects its intent — it is written in verse. (Kahn did not write the poem; that credit goes to the nonpartisan House Research Department staff.) The bill has been referred to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A companion bill, SF432, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble, awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

One might think it logical, even expected, for this state to have a poet laureate. Minnesota is known for its support of the arts, and 40 other states have an official position of poet laureate or state writer. Two Minnesota cities, Duluth and St. Paul, have their own, and various counties and cities throughout the country are doing the same.

The first poet laureate of Minnesota was Margaret Ball Dickson, given her title by the Poet Laureate League in 1934. Shortly after her appointment, Gov. Floyd B. Olson sent a letter to Dickson offering his congratulations on her "designation" as poet laureate, but there was never an official appointment.

In 1974, there was an election for poet laureate, led by columnist Abe Altowitz of the *Minnesota Star*. When the votes were tallied, Laurene Tibbetts was named poet laureate, though again, not officially recognized. That same year, there was a bill proposed to create an official position, but it was held up in committee and never moved forward.

During the last biennium, the House and Senate overwhelmingly passed a bill — this version was not in verse — to establish the position of poet laureate, but it failed to become law.

"While respectful and appreciative of

the arts, I do not believe Minnesota needs an official state poet laureate," wrote Gov. Tim Pawlenty, in a letter explaining his veto. "Even though we have a state 'folklorist,' I also have some concern this will lead to calls for other similar positions. We could see requests for a state mime, interpretative dancer, or potter."

Kahn notes that around the time of Pawlenty's veto, Ted Kossler, at that time the U.S. Poet Laureate, spoke to a sold-out audience in Minneapolis. "There was a huge turnout for a poetry reading," said Kahn. "People wanted to hear what he had to say."

When asked why she's bringing this issue up again, Kahn said she believes the time is right.

"Poetry is much more prominent now with kids than when I was a kid, and we just memorized 'The Ride of Paul Revere,'" Kahn said. The popularity of spoken word contests and rap poetry is bringing poetry to an entirely new audience.

Poetry is also having an impact on today's youth, and it can open doors to reading and furthering education, said Kahn. When children are involved with poetry, "you can see a difference. There is a connection."

Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), co-sponsor of HF224 and himself a published author, agrees that exposing more people to culture is a good thing to do. "I think that identifying someone as a poet laureate promotes culture," Urdahl said. "It's the right thing to do."

Kahn, whose favorite poem is "Under Milk

This Document can be made available in alternative formats upon request

State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION

January 18, 2007
Authored by Kahn, Urdahl, Helly, Bates and Haugman
 The bill was read for the first time, and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections

HOUSE FILE NO. 224

1.1 A bill for an act

1.2 relating to the state; appointing a poet laureate; appropriating gift or grant money

1.3 received; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 138.

1.4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

1.5 Section 1. [138.99] POET LAUREATE.

1.6 Subdivision 1. Appointment.

1.7 The Gov' shall appoint a state poet laureate,

1.8 Who shall serve for a four-year term.

1.9 Because this appointment will always be great,

1.10 There's no need for the Senate to confirm.

1.11 In appointing a poet for the public good,

1.12 And to ensure there's no unjust omission,

1.13 The governor shall consider, if he would

1.14 Thoughts of the Humanities Commission.

1.15 Subd. 2. Removal.

1.16 The poet will be free to write rhyming lines,

1.17 With removal only for cause,

1.18 But we trust that the bard will promptly resign,

1.19 If the verse reads as badly as laws.

1.20 Subd. 3. Compensation.

1.21 "Would be fair to provide some just recompense

1.22 As reward for the poet's tribulations,

1.23 But because at this time we haven't the cents

1.24 We're afraid there is no compensation.

1.25 But we ask as the poet travels the state,

1.26 And the people their ears they lend,

2.1 That our learned Commission take the position

2.2 To provide the poor poet a stipend.

2.3 Subd. 4. Gifts and grants.


2.4 To provide the support that needs to come

2.5 To support our new laureate,

2.6 Gifts and grants received of a generous sum,

2.7 We hereby appropriate.

Wood," by Dylan Thomas, remembers a speech given by John F. Kennedy, Jr. in honor of the poet Robert Frost. Kennedy said: "When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses, for art establishes the basic human truths which must serve as the touchstones of judgment."

Kahn points out that the governor is currently emphasizing technology. But without poetry, technology could have an unwanted effect, said Kahn. "Technology should be moderated by poetry." 

Less of a learning curve

Anderson goes from staff member to House member

By CRAIG GREEN

For most freshmen representatives, there is a period of adjustment when they begin working at the State Office Building. They



Rep. Sarah Anderson

have new offices and staff, rules of protocol to learn for drafting legislation and etiquette for floor sessions. Not so for Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth), a 10-year veteran of working across the street from the Capitol.

Anderson worked as a legislative assistant, a committee administrator, was an executive assistant to former House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) for six years, and she oversaw many legislative assistants.

While growing up, it was routine for Anderson and her family to discuss politics. These early conversations motivated her to

learn more about the political process and get involved. This led her to the University of Minnesota-Duluth, where she majored in political science and sociology, and met her husband, Paul. Once out of college, she worked in the private sector, before coming to work at the House.

Anderson said she represents “a unique district. We’re a growing community with young families and a growing diverse population.”

This growth means transportation is a “huge issue” for her district.

Four heavily traveled roadways—Highways 55 and 169, and Interstates 394 and 494—either go through or border her district, causing major traffic congestion. Anderson wants to work together to find a way to improve this situation, and find ways to improve the transportation system for Minnesota as a whole. “I am passionate about working in a bipartisan manner with other legislators to

| DISTRICT 43A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,957 |
| Largest city: Plymouth |
| County: Hennepin |
| Top concerns: Property taxes, education and transportation |

get the job done,” said Anderson.

Other topics of concern include property tax relief and education.

Anderson will directly address these issues on the committees she serves, including the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, and the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

A veteran observer of the process, Anderson is excited about her new role. “I’m the eternal optimist. I’m looking forward to having the opportunity to sit down in the committee process and work through these ideas, and figure out what’s the best solution for the citizens of Minnesota. That’s exciting to me.”

Education still top priority

Former teacher Benson wants to see improvements

By SONJA HEGMAN

Rep. John Benson’s (DFL-Minnetonka) political roots run deep.



Rep. John Benson

His ancestors, former Republicans, were active participants in the Farmer-Labor movement. His uncle traveled with former President Theodore Roosevelt to inspect the Panama Canal. His parents had many political discussions at the dinner table when Benson was growing up. And Benson himself had several conversations with Hubert Humphrey.

Originally from Montana, Benson’s family saw good times and bad. His father was a big poker player and, family rumor has it, this kept the family afloat. A lover of card games as well, Benson enjoys the game bridge because

“you psych out your opponent and it helps stave off Alzheimer’s disease.”

A retired high school teacher, Benson taught language arts, social studies and economics during his 34-year career in Edina. He was recruited for that teaching position, and considers his election to the House as the first job interview he has ever had.

Since his retirement in 1999, he has volunteered many hours to campaigns. When freezes and cutbacks on education funding occurred in 2003, Benson became frustrated with the Legislature.

“I was unable to shut up,” he said. “That’s why I ran.”

Benson won the seat held for nine terms by a Republican, Ron Abrams, who was appointed to a judgeship last year.

Education is a top concern in Benson’s district. The Hopkins School District is in a statutory operating debt, meaning it has spent more money than it has and does not have a

| DISTRICT 43B |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,921 |
| Largest city: Plymouth |
| County: Hennepin |
| Top concerns: Education, property tax relief and health care |

reserve budget, a violation of state law, he said. A neighborhood school was closed because of this as a way to offset some of the district’s costs. Benson does not want other schools to close in his district, he said, and wants to see a change in the way education is funded.

“I’m interested in the education of every kid in the state,” Benson said. “Our kids are the future. We need to invest in them.”

Benson is very optimistic about his first session, and said people in both caucuses can see “we need to move” on various issues. He’s also interested to see what will be decided with the budget surplus.

“It’s tough to make a buck, and we shouldn’t just spend because we have it,” he said.

Taking a new direction

Faust hopes to get government working

By SONJA HEGMAN

Rep. Tim Faust (DFL-Mora) wants to move Minnesota in the right direction.



Rep. Tim Faust

The freshman has already co-sponsored legislation to get the state's government "working again." This is also the reason he ran for office.

He also signed onto the DFL's so-called "Focus on Basics" agenda, which include bills that would extend health care coverage to every Minnesota child; make voluntary full-day every day kindergarten available in each school district; increase the basic education funding formula by 3 percent in both 2008 and 2009; prevent government shutdown; and provide \$20 million in tax relief to Minnesota taxpayers.

With no job growth in his district "for a long time," Faust said job creation is probably the No. 1 issue in his district.

"We're competing in the global job market," he said. "When my kids get out of college they won't be competing with the kid from South Dakota. They'll be competing with the kid from South Korea."

For this reason, Faust, who beat two-term incumbent Judy Soderstrom, wants to see equity in school funding so all students get the knowledge they need.

"There's no excuse not to have equity in school funding," he said. "It would be easier to throw our model away and start over, than try to fix it." He has co-sponsored a bill that ensures state education funding so districts can budget more efficiently.

Health care costs are also an issue for his constituents. For example, one family's per

| DISTRICT 8B |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,998 |
| Largest city: Mora |
| Counties: Isanti, Kanabec and Pine |
| Top concerns: Job growth, the economy and education funding |

paycheck cost for health insurance jumped from \$100 to \$400. These costs, in addition to rising property taxes, have hurt his district tremendously, he said.

"Some people who have lived in their homes for years have been forced to move to nursing homes because they can't afford their property taxes," Faust said. "It's crazy to force people out of their homes. We have to do everything we can to help them stay in their homes."

In addition to serving as vice chairman of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee, he serves on the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs, and K-12 finance divisions.

Schools advocate

Laine seeks to address education, property taxes in year one

By CRAIG GREEN

Rep. Carolyn Laine (DFL-Columbia Heights) believes in family and the power of education.



Rep. Carolyn Laine

Laine, who holds degrees in education and psychology, believes in the importance of early childhood education. "I've studied how the brain develops, and I know that the early years are the foundation of a child's education," she said.

She believes that with adequate resources and attention, the educational development of

young people in Minnesota can be addressed more effectively. "If [a child] has stress in their life, they live in poverty, have inadequate housing and no health care, their development is affected."

Laine, who serves on the Columbia Heights Charter Commission, decided to run for office after former Rep. Barbara Goodwin announced that she would not seek another term. With encouragement and support from her five children — Jennifer, Jesse, Teresa, Sarah and Anniki — she entered the race.

The level of property taxes her constituents are asked to pay is something she wants to address. "There needs to be an equitable form of taxation. We encourage people to buy homes, and then we tax them at unreasonable rates."

Laine will have a direct voice on these issues, serving on the House E-12 Education Committee, the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division, the House

| DISTRICT 50A |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,916 |
| Largest city: Fridley |
| Counties: Anoka and Ramsey |
| Top concerns: Education, property taxes and health care |

Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division and the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division. She also serves on the Minnesota Heritage Finance Division.

Sitting in her new office, decorated with the help of one of her daughters, Laine knows she has an opportunity to speak and stand up for many others.

"I grew up on the Iron Range, and I'm focused on supporting working families and their struggles. There are businesses and corporations that need to remember that they have human beings with families working for them. You don't stand on the back of anyone and pretend they're not there."

Monday, January 29

HF367-Johnson (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Ramsey County; corrections provisions modified.

HF368-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Statewide hospitality fee eliminated and money appropriated.

HF369-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Second inspection fee and the statewide hospitality fee for elementary and secondary schools eliminated.

HF370-Mahoney (DFL)

Finance

Higher education asset preservation and replacement established and money appropriated.

HF371-Slocum (DFL)

Finance

Richfield; capital improvements for athletic fields construction provided.

HF372-Slocum (DFL)

Finance

Richfield; capital improvements for a new arterial street construction provided.

HF373-Johnson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

St. Paul; intoxicating liquor license authorized.

HF374-Hansen (DFL)

Finance

Board of Water and Soil Resources general services grants provided.

HF375-Ruud (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Global Warming Mitigation Act enacted.

HF376-Paulsen (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State Web site with a searchable database on state contracts and grants funding required.

HF377-Thao (DFL)

Finance

Lifetrack Resources immigrant and refugee collaborative programs grant funding provided.

HF378-Johnson (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul National Great River Park improvements funding provided.

HF379-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul Union Depot improvements funding provided.

HF380-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

High-speed rail line between St. Paul and Chicago state's funding share provided.

HF381-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Central Corridor transitway between St. Paul and Minneapolis funding provided.

HF382-Atkins (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee political activities limitations restricted.

HF383-Slawik (DFL)

Finance

Ramsey County; mothers first program for alcohol and drug use early intervention funding provided.

HF384-Erickson (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State grants executive agency management coordination by the commissioner of administration provided.

HF385-Nornes (R)

Finance

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities tuition freeze provided, job training programs consolidated, on-line courses offerings increased.

HF386-Kalin (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul to Hinckley Rush Line Corridor funding provided.

HF387-Clark (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Predatory lending practices regulated and remedies and criminal penalties provided.

HF388-Cornish (R)

Finance

Waseca; Minnesota Agricultural Interpretive Center operations provided.

HF389-Hamilton (R)

Finance

Jackson County Central School District fund transfer authorized.

HF390-Rukavina (DFL)

Taxes

Disabled veteran or surviving spouse homestead property tax exemption provided.

HF391-Rukavina (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Employee invention agreements regulated.

HF392-Erickson (R)

Finance

Special license plates; pink ribbon breast cancer awareness plate emblems issued.

HF393-Scalze (DFL)

Finance

Geothermal heat pump uses study funded by the Public Utilities Commission.

HF394-DeLaForest (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State grant moratorium imposed until effective management and improved accountability is established.

HF395-Dominguez (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Minnesota Family Investment Program transitional standard increased.

HF396-Dominguez (DFL)

E-12 Education

School district extended time revenue increased.

HF397-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Finance

Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center arena money appropriated.

HF398-Huntley (DFL)

Finance

Tuition and fees paid by Wisconsin residents attending the University of Minnesota regulated.

HF399-Rukavina (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Long-Term Care Patient Access to Pharmaceuticals Act established and penalties provided.

HF400-Hosch (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Nursing facilities for the provision of additional specialized services contracts allowed, reimbursement for short-stay residents modified, operating payment rates increased, case mix indices implemented and rate adjustments provided.

HF401-Thissen (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Nursing facility moratorium exception proposals criteria provided, allowable equipment interest limit increased, replacement-cost-new per bed limit increased, nursing facility property costs reimbursement provided and funds authorized.

HF402-Hansen (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Residential microbial pesticide applicator licensure study required.

HF403-Peterson, S. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Campaign material to constitutional requirements disclaimer requirements conformed.

HF404-Hilty (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Incorporation of socially responsible for-profit business corporations provided.

HF405-Hilty (DFL)

Finance

Culkin rest area on Interstate 35 reopened.

HF406-Welti (DFL)

Taxes

Small city definition modified.

HF407-Dean (R)

Finance

St. Croix River in Stillwater flood control levee project provided.

HF408-Rukavina (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Independent living skills services provided by certain additional qualified people, and Centers for Independent Living regulated.

HF409-Morrow (DFL)

Finance

Library telecommunications aid and telecommunications/Internet access equity provided.

HF410-Tillberry (DFL)

Finance

Independent School District No. 14, Fridley, levy authorized.

HF411-Dittrich (DFL)

E-12 Education

Financial literacy curriculum incorporated into high school graduation standards economic course requirements.

HF412-Peterson, S. (DFL)

E-12 Education

Professional teaching standards grant program established.

HF413-Lillie (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Outdoor sport equipment dealers franchise agreements with manufacturers regulated, title requirements imposed.

HF414-Liebling (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Crime victims emergency needs fund grants authorized.

HF415-Poppe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Noise standards exemptions modified.

HF416-Brynaert (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Mental health certified peer specialist program established.

HF417-Bigham (DFL)
E-12 Education
Elementary and middle school years education International Baccalaureate pilot program established.

HF418-Bigham (DFL)
Finance
Red Rock Corridor transitway funding provided.

HF419-Sailer (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Off-highway vehicle damage account modified.

HF420-Ward (DFL)
E-12 Education
Health and physical education course requirements provided, approved local school wellness policies posted on department Web site, grant program established and rulemaking authorized.

HF421-Anderson, B. (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Drug paraphernalia crime modified to address mental state requirements, sales of paraphernalia, and consolidate into single statutory section; possession of items associated with controlled substances prohibited and penalties imposed.

HF422-Seifert (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Redwood River designated as a canoe and boating route.

HF423-Mullery (DFL)
E-12 Education
Juvenile and criminal justice systems, and delinquent and criminal conduct consequences taught to middle school students.

HF424-Mullery (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Auto insurance discrimination prohibited based on geographic location within the metropolitan area.

HF425-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Motor vehicle theft victims emergency grants authorized.

HF426-Hamilton (R)
Finance
Workforce development fund for extended employment services for persons with severe disabilities base appropriation redefined.

HF427-Hamilton (R)
Health & Human Services
Medical assistance operating payment rates for low-payment rate nursing facilities adjusted and money appropriated.

HF428-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Voting age lowered to 16 for school district elections and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF429-Erickson (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Legislative Coordinating Commission required to study issues relating to men.

HF430-Erickson (R)
E-12 Education
Teacher training provided for qualified professionals.

HF431-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Transit pass income tax credit extended to nonprofit organizations.

HF432-Paymar (DFL)
Taxes
Limited market value law extended for two years.

HF433-Cornish (R)
Taxes
Alternative fuel vehicle federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF434-Cornish (R)
Taxes
Hydrogen used to power engines or fuel cells exempted from the sales tax.

HF435-Cornish (R)
Taxes
Alternative fuel vehicle conversion income tax credit provided.

HF436-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 adopted establishing energy policy goals and providing for renewable energy obligations.

HF437-Bunn (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Pan flashing required under all exterior windows and doors.

HF438-Ozment (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Heritage enhancement fund and council established, sales tax increased and funds dedicated, arts and cultural resources funding provided, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF439-Greiling (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Lake property sellers required to disclose and provide to buyers known existing land surveys.

HF440-Madore (DFL)
E-12 Education
Adults with disabilities program funding increased.

HF441-Mullery (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
State lottery net proceeds and in-lieu tax distribution modified.

HF442-Howes (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Emily sales tax authorized and fund use specified.

HF443-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Alternative school year calendar program grants provided.

HF444-Johnson (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Senior nutrition funding restored, grants provided.

HF445-Erickson (R)
Finance
School district debt service levies tax base modified.

HF446-Kahn (DFL)
Finance
Outdoor light pollution restricted.

HF447-Dill (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Crane Lake certificates of indebtedness authorized.

HF448-Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Auto insurance verification mailing program repealed.

HF449-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Taxes
Property tax refund program extended to residents of certain nursing homes.

HF450-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Big Stone County nursing facility planned closure rate adjustment authorized.

HF451-Jaros (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Honor guard member reimbursement provided for National Guard funerals.

HF452-Mahoney (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Technology and commercialization unit established in the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

HF453-Juhnke (DFL)
Finance
Renewable energy requirements imposed, large energy facilities certificates of need regulated, integrated resource planning requirements and transmission planning processes regulated and transmission lines taxation provided.

HF454-Fritz (DFL)
Taxes
Faribault tax increment financing expenditures authorized.

HF455-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Public defense provisions of law updated and clarified, defendant representation co-payments eliminated and chief public defender appointment provided.

HF456-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Minimum wage increased and indexed, training wage eliminated and new employee notice required.

HF457-Gardner (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Scrap metal dealer purchase record-keeping expanded relating to law enforcement.

HF458-Cornish (R)
Finance
Peace Officer Standards and Training Board appropriation increased.

HF459-Johnson (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County; summer employment for at-risk youth funding provided.

HF460-Lesch (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County All Children Excel (ACE) program funding provided.

HF461-Solberg (DFL)
Finance
Grand Rapids Children's Discovery Museum funding provided.

HF462-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

Deaf and hearing loss; support services funding provided to families with children who are deaf or have a hearing loss.

HF463-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare small employer buy-in option created.

HF464-Sertich (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

School employee statewide health insurance plan established.

HF465-Kranz (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent nonprofit firefighting corporations included in joint exercise of powers agreements.

HF466-Dittrich (DFL)**Taxes**

Property tax relief provided; and equity, transition and referendum equalization levies increased and indexed.

HF467-Dittrich (DFL)**Taxes**

Property tax relief provided; and debt service equalization revenue, health and safety, deferred maintenance, and operating capital levies increased and indexed.

Thursday, February 1

HF468-Hilty (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

United States Senate vacancy election procedures specified.

HF469-Svigum (R)**Taxes**

Property tax class 4c expanded to include certain nonprofit community service oriented organizations.

HF470-Brod (R)**Health & Human Services**

Vaccines; patient notification required when a vaccine contains more than a trace amount of mercury.

HF471-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Lake Titlow watershed improvements funding provided.

HF472-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Renewable energy production incentives eligibility period extended.

HF473-Erickson (R)**E-12 Education**

Child abuse; agency jurisdiction for investigations clarified relating to schools and school-age care programs, and child abuse offender information repository plan development required.

HF474-Brod (R)**Health & Human Services**

Health care system redesign statewide plan development provided.

HF475-Loeffler (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Adult dependents private health care coverage expanded by including those not enrolled as full-time students.

HF476-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sex offender residence upon release from confinement location requirements modified.

HF477-Tillberry (DFL)**Taxes**

Parent volunteering at child's school or child care income tax credit provided.

HF478-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Universal health care system provided, preventive care and early intervention focus required, cost reductions and comprehensive benefits provided, plan implementation required by 2010 and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF479-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Universal health care system provided, preventive care and early intervention focus required, cost reductions and comprehensive benefits provided and plan implementation by 2010 required.

HF480-Ruud (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Minnesota Family Investment Program children's mental health pilot project authorized and money appropriated.

HF481-Hosch (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School districts authorized to grant required course credits to students who satisfactorily complete science, math or arts courses as part of career and technical education programs.

HF482-Hortman (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School year length increased and school start before Labor Day prohibition repealed.

HF483-Slawik (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota False Claims Act established.

HF484-Koenen (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Beginning farmer program administered by the Rural Finance Authority provisions modified and income tax credits provided to beginning farmers for participating in farm management programs.

HF485-Magnus (R)**Finance**

Floodplain management funding provided.

HF486-Finstad (R)**Taxes**

Homestead classification extended to certain property used for non-homestead purposes.

HF487-Finstad (R)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 2884, Red Rock Central, fund transfer authorized.

HF488-Finstad (R)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 81, Comfrey, fund transfer authorized.

HF489-Hilstrom (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Staff development funding authorized for school districts with schools not making adequate yearly progress.

HF490-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent state planning office reestablished.

HF491-Erhardt (R)**Health & Human Services**

Family planning access increased to prevent unintended pregnancies, nurses authorized to dispense oral contraceptives at clinics, family planning services reimbursement rates increased and grant reductions eliminated.

HF492-Haws (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Counties provided funding for housing short-term felony offenders and short-term offender advisory task force created.

HF493-Mariani (DFL)**Finance**

Statewide science, technology, engineering and math incentive funding provided.

HF494-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources dedicated sales tax funding provided, great outdoors and clean water fund established, Great Outdoors Council created, bonds issued and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF495-Rukavina (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

St. Louis County variances required.

HF496-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax policy and administrative provisions modified.

HF497-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Rural Finance Authority loan funding provided.

HF498-Cornish (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Self-defense; use of force in defense of home and person laws clarified, self-defense and defense of home laws extended and codified, and common law duty to retreat eliminated.

HF499-Magnus (R)**Health & Human Services**

Chemical use assessments modified and duties imposed on the commissioner of human services related to chemical health.

HF500-Rukavina (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Disabled hunters permit provisions extended to include chronic disabilities.

HF501-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Radiation therapy facility construction limitations expiration date eliminated.

HF502-Beard (R)**Finance**

Scott County regional public safety training facility funding provided.

HF503-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Establishing penalties for sexual solicitation of children through the Internet.

HF504-Hilstrom (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Bullying and intimidation policies in schools required to address electronic and Internet activity.

HF505-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Harassment; restraining orders authorized against Internet providers or other computer systems publishing harassing information.

HF506-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Domestic abuse no contact order repeat violator felony penalty imposed, and qualified domestic violence-related offenses defined.

HF507-Tingelstad (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Zero discharge grants provided to municipalities for wastewater treatment facilities.

HF508-Tingelstad (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Zero discharge requirements provided for wastewater treatment grants and loans to municipalities.

HF509-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Chromated copper arsenate-treated lumber removal required from schools, parks and child care facilities.

HF510-Erickson (R)**E-12 Education**

School start prior to Labor Day prohibition repealed.

HF511-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State employee political activities limitations restricted.

HF512-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Gift certificate and gift card expiration dates and service fees prohibited.

HF513-Lenczewski (DFL)**Finance**

Bloomington; Old Cedar Avenue bridge removal and replacement funding provided.

HF514-Thissen (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Attorney fee awards factors provided.

HF515-Sviggum (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators prohibited from lobbying for one year after leaving office.

HF516-Cornish (R)**Finance**

Blue Earth County; Rapidan Dam study provided.

HF517-Nelson (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax information reporting requirements expanded.

HF518-Seifert (R)**Health & Human Services**

Licensed nursing home beds surcharge reduced.

HF519-Seifert (R)**Finance**

Minnesota Inventors Congress funding provided.

HF520-Seifert (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota River Trail loop extension provided.

HF521-Heidgerken (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Day paid day off provided to veterans employed by school districts, Veterans Day educational instruction required and private employers encouraged to grant paid holiday to veterans.

HF522-Welti (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Glass containers prohibited on public beaches and watercraft, and proper disposal required of waste carried on state waters.

HF523-Lenczewski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators, constitutional officers, agency heads and certain legislative employees prohibited from lobbying for one year after leaving office.

HF524-Peterson, N. (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Campaign finance disclosure requirements modified, independent expenditures by political party units limited, electioneering communications regulated and work group established.

HF525-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Public health program applicant's employer disclosure required.

HF526-Benson (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School district operating cost differential study required.

HF527-Davnie (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Veterans homes previous asset preservation appropriation use expanded to include repair and betterment at the homes.

HF528-Kalin (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Impounded vehicle sales authorized after voluntary transfer, notice and right to reclaim contents of vehicle provided, and liability of impound lot operator established.

HF529-Thao (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Amino-based acid elemental formula health insurance coverage required.

HF530-Ruud (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Human papilloma virus vaccination of female children required and educational materials developed.

HF531-Beard (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Scott County Library Board provided as an advisory to the county board.

HF532-Winkler (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Military personnel utility and other contracts regulated and cancellations authorized.

HF533-Lieder (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans tuition and fee assistance and reimbursement provided for military veterans and their surviving spouses and children at public colleges and universities.

HF534-Lieder (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Appropriations continued in effect until eliminated or amended by the Legislature.

HF535-Hamilton (R)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Agricultural-based bioscience training and testing center funding provided.

HF536-Loeffler (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Energy efficient new commercial property assessed market value reduction provided.

HF537-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act modified.

HF538-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Conservation Corps funding provided.

HF539-Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Trunk Highway Route No. 145 technical correction provided and Legislative Route No. 262 removed.

HF540-Erickson (R)**Transportation Finance Division**

School bus driver physical exam requirements satisfied by Federal Aviation Administration medical certificates.

HF541-Hilstrom (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Identity theft crime definition expanded to include posing as another person for purposes of harassing or defaming.

HF542-Buesgens (R)**Rules & Legislative Administration**

Legislator salary established and per diem payments eliminated.

HF543-Swails (DFL)**Finance**

Gifted and talented programming funding increased and school districts required to identify gifted and talented students.

HF544-Moe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

State parks and trails funding provided.

HF545-Paymar (DFL)**Finance**

Board of Public Defense funding provided for transcripts.

HF546-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

State employee cost comparison required before entering into transportation privatization contracts, 10 percent savings requirement specified and annual report required.

HF547-Wardlow (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teacher's retirement association rule of 90 benefits extended to coordinated members.

HF548-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State agencies required to certify that no state employees are on recall lists and are able to perform specified services before seeking approval of certain contracts.

HF549-Davnie (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Charter school qualifying special education costs funding provided.

HF550-Seifert (R)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Post-secondary courses offered in secondary schools requirements clarified.

HF551-Wollschlager (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Tax deduction for out-of-state active military duty clarified.

HF552-Buesgens (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Political subdivisions authorized to establish accounts to pay for post-employment benefits owed to officers and employees.

HF553-Hilty (DFL)

Energy Finance & Policy Division
Renewable energy economic development strategy required.

HF554-Nelson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor
Employee Free Choice Act support memorialized by resolution to Congress.

HF555-Bly (DFL)

Finance
Community education youth service program funding increased.

HF556-Beard (R)

Transportation Finance Division
Airport safety zones transfers of real property disclosure requirements clarified.

HF557-Morgan (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Airports Commission mayoral memberships added.

HF558-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance
School district sharing of superintendent's incentive created.

HF559-Nelson (DFL)

Finance
Trunk Highway 169, Hennepin County State-Aid Highway and 85th Avenue North intersection interchange construction authorized.

HF560-Hortman (DFL)

Finance
Highway 610 trunk highway finance completion authorized.

HF561-Thissen (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Joint and several liability in certain civil actions allocated.

HF562-Lieder (DFL)

Finance
Town road sign replacement program implemented.

HF563-Sailer (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Collection, transportation and recycling of video display devices and civil penalties provided.

HF564-Erickson (R)

Commerce & Labor
Cable and satellite television customer choice provided.

HF565-Kalin (DFL)

Finance
Trunk Highway 95 bridge construction authorized and state trunk highway bonds issued.

HF566-Garofalo (R)

Finance
Dakota County; Highway 3 trunk highway bonds issued.

HF567-Smith (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Employee political activities outside the workplace restrictions forbidden.

HF568-Heidgerken (R)

Taxes
Income tax credit for sales or rentals of agricultural assets to beginning farmers and farmer financial management programs provided.

LATE ACTION

Committee approves smoking ban

Minnesota may become one of 20 states to impose a statewide smoking ban.

The so-called "Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007" would prohibit smoking in public places, places of employment, public transportation and at public meetings.

Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), sponsor of **HF305**, told the House Health Care and Human Services Committee Feb. 1 that his No. 1 concern with this legislation is "worker protection."

"You should not have to choose between your health and a job," he said.

Arguments were fierce from proponents and

opponents of the bill, which was ultimately approved 12-6 and sent to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. Six amendments, including one exempting establishments who install high-powered ventilators from the ban, were not added to the legislation.

Opponents argued workers can choose where they want to work, and expressed concern about the economic effects of a ban.

Mike McFarland, owner of Paul Bunyan Bowl in Brainerd and representing the Bowling Proprietors Association of Minnesota, said, "It will cost me 15 percent to 20 percent of my league bowlers. The season is long and even losing 15 percent may not allow me to keep the operation going and pass it on to my son. ... Something that isn't illegal will lead to my business failing."

Some also said such a mandate infringes on rights of business owners.

"It is not the role of industry to choose how we serve our guests. It's our choice to allow smoking and it's a customer's decision to come to our establishment," said Steven Watson, president of Minnesota Restaurant Association.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), a co-sponsor of the bill, said above all the legislation offers employees, regardless of their trade, a smoke-free environment. "The goal is to even the playing field across the state. Workers have a right to a health hazard-free work area."

A companion bill, **SF238**, sponsored by **Sen. Kathy Sheran** (DFL-Mankato), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 5 by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

State Agencies

Administration.....(651) 201-2555
Agriculture(651) 201-6550
(800) 967-2474
Commerce.....(651) 296-4026
Corrections(651) 361-7200
Education(651) 582-8200
Employee Relations.....(651) 259-3637
Employment and
Economic Development.....(651) 296-3711
(800) 657-3858
Enterprise Technology.....(651) 296-8885
Finance.....(651) 201-8000
Health(651) 201-5000
Human Rights.....(651) 296-5663
Human Services(651) 431-2000
Iron Range Resources(218) 744-7400
(800) 765-5043
Labor and Industry(651) 284-5005
(800) 342-5354
Mediation Services.....(651) 649-5421
Metropolitan Council.....(651) 602-1000
Military Affairs.....(651) 268-8925

Housing Finance Agency.....(651) 296-7608
(800) 657-3769
Higher Education Services(651) 642-0567
(800) 657-3866
Natural Resources(651) 296-6157
(888) 646-6367
Pollution Control Agency.....(651) 296-6300
(800) 657-3864
Public Safety General Information.....(651)
201-7000
Driver and Vehicle Services.....(651) 297-3608
Alcohol and Gambling
Enforcement Division.....(651) 201-7507
Division of Homeland Security
and Emergency Management.....(651) 201-7400
State Duty Officer
(24-Hour Emergency).....(651) 649-5451
(800) 422-0798
State Patrol(651) 201-7100
Revenue
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Water and watersheds

| | |
|---|---------|
| Approximate acres of state, in millions, that are lakes, streams or wetlands..... | 13 |
| State rank among the lower 48 states for surface water | 1 |
| Estimated millions of acres of wetland in Minnesota | 9.3 |
| Approximate percent of state that is wetland | 20 |
| Major drainage basins, the area of land drained by a river or lake and its tributaries, in Minnesota | 10 |
| Square miles, as approximate, of Lake Superior basin | 6,200 |
| Number of watershed districts in state | 46 |
| Percent of state waters managed by watershed districts or watershed management organizations | 30 |
| Soil and water conservation districts operated on a county basis throughout the state | 91 |
| Federal and state agencies that provide watershed management services, including technical assistance, funding, permits and some oversight | 14 |
| Local entities that carry out "on-the-ground" watershed management activities..... | 11 |
| Millions, as approximate, spent in Minnesota in 2005 by federal, state and local units of government to manage state watersheds | \$300 |
| Of the state's 10 percent of streams and 16 percent of lakes that have been assessed for water quality under the standards of the federal Clean Water Act, approximate percent that are classified as impaired..... | 40 |
| Year all assessments should be completed | 2015 |
| Percent of state's water pollution that comes from non-point sources, the combined effects of runoff from individual land parcels..... | 86 |
| Times higher the levels of phosphorus in Lake Minnetonka and the Minneapolis' Chain of Lakes were in the 1970s than they are today | 1.5-3.5 |
| Degrees Fahrenheit at which water is most dense | 39 |
| Average temperature, in degrees Fahrenheit, of Lake Superior..... | 40 |
| Maximum depth of Lake Superior, in feet..... | 1,332 |
| Miles of shoreline and islands that rim Lake Superior | 2,726 |
| Percent of the world's water that is saltwater or otherwise undrinkable..... | 97 |
| Percent held in icecaps or glaciers | 2 |
| Percent of human brain that is water | 75 |
| Estimated tons of water, in trillions, evaporated by the sun each day..... | 1 |
| Times per day, on average, water faucets are turned on by a household | 70 |
| Percent of people on earth who could live in water-stressed conditions by 2025 if present consumption patterns continue..... | 66.7 |

Sources: **Watershed Management**, Office of the Legislative Auditor, Jan. 25, 2007; **The Freshwater Society**; **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**, including **Watershed Achievements Report**, September 2006.

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SESSION WEEKLY

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MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 6 • FEBRUARY 9, 2007



HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS
BIOFUELS, BIOMASS
COLD BELGIAN BREWS

HF569- HF801

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: An ice halo appears to arc over the State Capitol Jan. 26. Also known as an icebow, this optical phenomenon is similar to a rainbow, except that it is formed by the prism effects of millions of tiny ice crystals, instead of raindrops, associated with thin, high-level clouds.

—Photo by: Andrew VonBank

Without a home

Number of reasons for increased homelessness

By MIA SIMPSON

It's 7 p.m. on a Monday — lottery night — at Simpson Housing Services' emergency shelter. More than 70 men sit in rows of second hand couches and folding chairs, waiting for the weekly raffle to commence. The prize is a bed, reserved for 28 days, at one of three downtown Minneapolis shelters — Simpson's, Our Saviour's Housing and St. Stephen's Shelter.

The odds of a night's sleep indoors for these men are fair to low; between the three shelters, 22 beds are available, and among the entries are people who'd phoned in because they couldn't attend. Staff members instruct the 50 or so remaining to leave immediately after the drawing. There isn't enough food for everyone.

This scene was the first leg of a tour made by several members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division on a sub-zero Jan. 29 night.

Escorted by advocates to four locales across the Twin Cities metropolitan area — Simpson's, which serves single men; YouthLink, a drop-in center for teens; The Jeremiah Program, a transitional housing program for single mothers; and the Dorothy Day Center, a shelter for adults — the legislators went to learn about resources for the homeless and to witness their experience.

Beyond statistics

"The statistics don't do anything for what you'll see tonight," said Michael Dahl, executive director of Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

The numbers, in fact, aren't easy to quantify.

One report, called "Homeless in Minnesota 2003," produced by the Wilder Foundation, is referenced most often by homeless advocates and policymakers. The picture, drawn every three years with the help of hundreds of volunteers on a single night, provides just an estimate: 20,347 homeless or "precariously housed" people statewide in 2003, 10,600 of which were children. The report concludes the population is multiracial — 43 percent white, 40 percent black, 9 percent American Indian, 7 percent Hispanic and 1 percent Asian

— with a 70 percent unemployment rate. About half of homeless individuals suffer from a mental illness.

But the report also attests to the population's diversity.

Of the approximately 1,500 families counted in the survey, 82 percent are single mothers with children, homeless possibly because they fled domestic abuse or are deep in debt and underemployed.

Teen numbers on the rise

Teens are a growing demographic in the foundation's count; the figure is three times the amount from 1991, the first year of the survey.

"Paul," 19, was one of two youths legislators met. He walked into YouthLink, which provides an array of services for 1,300 young people annually, after a fight with his mother's abusive boyfriend left him homeless.

"I hadn't seen her in 12 years, and she kicked me out," he said.

Paul says he's "couch-hopping" — staying at a friend's home until he wears out his welcome.

Families and young people like Paul have differing needs, advocates say, and when added with other dominant groups of the homeless — veterans, addicts and the mentally ill — a one-size-fits-all approach can dismantle genuine attempts at support.

"We must offer a variety of options, so that homeless people can get the services that are right for them," said Wendy Wiegmann, family housing director at Simpson Housing Services.

She and other advocates describe a continuum of care that begins with outreach and ends at affordable housing. What's sandwiched in between — shelters, which often serve as



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

During a presentation by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Jessica Lefler of Minneapolis tells her story of becoming homeless and the struggles that followed to "rebuild" a home for herself and her family. Pictured with Lefler, at left, is Wendy Wiegmann from family housing director at Simpson Housing Services. Lefler is pictured at right with her 5-year-old son, Billy Joel Campbell.

**First Reading
continued on page 4**

gateways to other services; transitional housing, which typically lasts two years and often includes other assistance; and supportive housing, which can be permanent and may include supervision — provide the malleability that case workers and agency staff need to successfully move people into stable homes.

“There are a diversity of types of programs that exist across the state,” Dahl said. “We try to get people into supportive atmospheres, and not using as costly services that you might find in corrections, detox and emergency rooms, which are most often used by those suffering mental illness and/or addiction.”

Prevention is also key.

“Eighty to 90 percent will not end up homeless if they receive support,” Dahl said.

Unfortunately, public funding across all sectors has faded, especially at the federal level.

According to the Minnesota Housing Partnership, funding from the [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), which funded all operational costs in the 1980s,

now covers just 75 percent. [Community Development Block Grants](#), federal grants aimed at enhancing economic opportunities and housing in cities and counties, are supposed to decrease by \$2 billion from 2004 to 2008.

The issue of homelessness is also a market one. According to the partnership, 12 percent of families spent more than half their income on housing in 2005. A report by Dakota County calculated that wage earners must make \$17.30 an hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment at \$900 a month. The median wage for job vacancies in the Twin Cities in 2006 was \$12 an hour.

“It’s a perfect storm of things that lead to this situation,” said [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights). “We, in fact, created the system that we have now, where we remove the low-income housing and build other things, (have) people pushed off various resources that were available, and then there’s the increasing gap between ability to pay and how much things cost in housing these days.”

Policymakers are responding to the problem of homelessness. In 2004, Gov. Tim Pawlenty unveiled “[Minnesota’s Business Plan to End](#)

[Long-Term Homeless](#).” The plan, which sunsets in 2010, pulls in government, private, faith and nonprofit stakeholders to implement strategies, such as doubling the number of permanent supportive housing units to 4,000, establishing a system to track the number of homeless and providing grants aimed at improving stable housing to communities. Total investment from state, local and federal levels is \$540 million.

Additional monies, both to supplement the governor’s plan and fund other initiatives, have been proposed this year. [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), division chairwoman, has introduced [HF537](#), which seeks to appropriate \$8 million to aspects of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, federal legislation passed in 1974 that supports outreach, emergency shelters and transitional housing for young people. It has no Senate companion.

“It’s obvious people are very moved by the desperate situation these people are in and the difficulty of it,” she said. “I’ve seen what a difference an investment can make.”

KEEPING WATCH



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Alice Lesch, center, watches as St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Police Chief John Harrington testify before a joint hearing of House Public Safety Finance Division and Senate Public Safety Budget Division Feb. 6. Alice joined her father, Rep. John Lesch, seated left, at the joint committee, which also heard from Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Police Chief Tim Dolan.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Feb. 1-8 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

AGRICULTURE

Tax credit for dairy farmers

Andrew Goldberg grew up on a dairy farm, now owns 73 dairy cows and hopes to expand his operation near Deer Creek.

The May 2006 graduate from the University of Minnesota with a degree in animal sciences told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Feb. 6 that the proposed dairy investment credit would help the state's struggling dairy industry.

"We like seeing a U of M graduate, and we like seeing the next generation of dairy farmers," said [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), the division chairman. He also sponsors [HF9](#), which would provide a onetime tax credit to help modernize dairy animal operations in the state.

But it was the sponsor of a competing bill ([HF52](#)), [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), who presented the tax-credit concept to the committee. No action was taken.

Each bill would allow for a dairy investment credit against individual income and corporate franchise taxes to a maximum of \$50,000 for qualifying expenditures used to improve dairy operations.

A similar bill had support in the House last year, but ran into trouble during conference committee negotiations with the Senate. This session, the measure is included in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed budget.

The cost of the program during fiscal year 2008 is approximately \$5 million, according to the [Department of Revenue](#).

The companion bills, [SF76](#) and [SF90](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy) and [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), await action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

BIOSCIENCE

Helping bioscience companies

A shared laboratory space created to lend a helping hand to fledgling bioscience

companies would get a financial boost from the state, if a bill approved by a House committee becomes law.

[HF290](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would grant a one-time appropriation of \$5 million to University Enterprise Laboratories Inc. — a collaboration between the University of Minnesota, the city of St. Paul, corporate partners and private investors. It was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee Feb. 7 and now goes to the House Finance Committee.

"The University Enterprise Labs is a place where these small businesses can get a start, can grow into larger businesses," Mahoney said. UEL functions as a "subsidized lab space" where bioscience start-ups can have access to state-of-the-art equipment and exchange knowledge with other companies and organizations, he said.

Robert Elde, dean of the university's College of Biological Sciences and a UEL board member, said UEL was created partially out of a need to retain talented bioscience faculty and students at the university.

Elde said UEL provided bioscience researchers with "adequate research space outside of the academic environment, but close enough to the academic environment to piggyback on the work that they were doing in their research laboratory."

A companion bill, [SF582](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

Embryonic stem cell research

A bill that would pave the way for state-funded research using embryonic stem cells cleared its first legislative hurdle Feb. 7 when it was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee.

[HF34](#), sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), would allow state funds to be used for research involving both embryonic and adult human stem cells. In addition, the bill includes an informed consent provision that would require health care providers to give patients undergoing treatment for infertility the option of donating their embryos for research purposes; however, selling those embryos or other fetal tissue would be prohibited.

"This is needed because the federal government has really failed us on this issue," Kahn said, referring to President Bush's refusal to provide federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.

Correction

The phone number for the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division property tax hotline for metro area residents was incorrect in last week's Session Weekly. The correct phone number is (651) 297-8391.

We apologize for any inconvenience.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Meri Firpo, assistant professor and diabetes research at the University of Minnesota, testifies before the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee Feb. 7 in support of a bill that would establish a state stem cell research policy.

The bill came under fire from opponents who said that human life begins at conception, and that using human embryos for research was both unethical and unnecessary.

Christopher Leifeld, executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, called the bill "gravely and intrinsically wrong."

"Every human life, from the first moment

of existence until natural death, deserves our respect and protection,” Leifeld said.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) questioned whether it was appropriate to use embryonic stem cells when adult stem cells could be used instead.

“I do not oppose stem cell research in any way, shape or form — except for whenever we’re touching the very foundations of life,” Beard said.

Supporters of the bill, however, say that adult stem cells are not good enough.

“Adult stem cells are actually not useful for many diseases,” said Meri Firpo, assistant professor and diabetes researcher at the University of Minnesota.

Jackie Hunt Christensen, vice president of the Parkinson Association of Minnesota and a Parkinson’s disease patient herself, gave a single sentence of testimony in support of the bill: “We patients are running out of patience.”

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), committee chairman, successfully amended the bill by striking a “legislative findings” section as well as removing language that would have provided for a fiscal appropriation.

As amended, the bill now goes to the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division.

A companion bill, [SF100](#), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

BONDING

Capitol renovation concerns

Some House members want more time to digest and discuss the State Capitol renovation plan.

The House Capital Investment Finance Division was introduced to the \$260 million project for the first time Feb. 6, but took no action.

No funding plans have been introduced, but the pre-design plan suggests some funding be allocated during the 2007 session, so work could begin by 2008.

Nancy Stark, executive secretary of the [Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board](#), said an advisory committee was selected that included two members each from the House and Senate along with other building tenants.

“Representatives of your staff were there as a part of the pre-design,” she said. “It was difficult to get members to participate.”

[Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) has been in the capital finance division “since

SCIENCE PROJECT



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Members of the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division and staff visit the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul Feb. 5.

it was created,” but said this project was new to her three weeks ago.

“If I’d been told we were in the midst of planning a \$260 million plan, my ears sure would have perked up,” she said.

[Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) said it might be more beneficial in the long run to look at a plan that’s entirely different than the current pre-design. He said the division needs to look at what the Capitol really needs, and what to do with functions that aren’t required in the building.

“It’s not just, ‘Well, we need to retrofit (the Capitol) because the senators are over there and they need nice digs to make things work for them,’” he said.

The needs of the House and the Senate should be examined along with other agencies in the Capitol, he said, adding that the current State Office Building, where most House business occurs, has issues of its own.

“The whole interior of this building used to be an open courtyard,” Juhnke said. “We still have water problems that occur every year in here. All our hearing rooms aren’t equipped with working technology. We couldn’t have this meeting in our regular meeting room because there aren’t video cameras. We can’t even get the overhead projectors to work in there for heaven’s sake.”

Funding for Duluth arena

If funding is approved, Duluth could have the first arena in the world with an environmental design certification.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#)

(DFL-Hermantown), [HF164](#) would appropriate \$37.9 million in bonds to help fund a new arena at the 41-year-old Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. It was discussed by the House Capital Investment Finance Division Feb. 1, but not acted upon.

To receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, the arena would be designed to maximize energy efficiencies, recycling programs and other green aspects, including the use of local renewable resources throughout the building, said Dan Russell, DECC executive director. He added that the goal is to reduce energy use by approximately 50 percent over traditional arenas. LEED certification is given by the U.S. Green Building Council and promotes a whole building approach to sustainability. The DECC arena would be the first LEED certified arena in the world, Russell said.

The estimated \$76 million arena would be used by the mens and womens hockey programs at the [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#), for concerts and other events.

Murphy said the center serves all of northern Minnesota, parts of Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. More than 70 percent of the arena’s guests come from outside of Duluth.

Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson said the arena is a “centerpiece” of the city’s downtown entertainment district. He said there is strong support for a 0.75 percent increase in the city’s food and drink sales tax to support part of the project cost. It has gotten unanimous support from the Duluth City Council. The university and DECC would also contribute funding.

Funding nearly happened in last year’s

bonding law, but Murphy said the DECC was the last project that didn't get in.

A companion bill, [SF57](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

BUSINESS

Cold Belgian brews

"Bottoms up!" Belgian beer fans may have shouted as a bill allowing for the sale of 750-milliliter bottles by brewpubs and small brewers was heard by the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 6.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), [HF310](#) would add the larger bottles, which are traditional to Belgian beers, to the already approved 64-ounce containers sold by small brewers and brewpubs.

Ken Thiemann, an up-and-coming brewmaster in Larsmont, along the North Shore, said that under current law he would be unable to sell or serve his homemade beer in the traditional Belgian fashion. Additionally, the equipment needed to make Belgian beer is made to fit 750-milliliter bottles, he said.

There was no opposition to the bill, held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus liquor bill.

A companion bill, [SF201](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Bakke](#) (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

Break for veteran-owned businesses

Veteran-owned and operated businesses could be added to a list of small-business groups eligible for special consideration for state and local government purchasing contracts.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), sponsor of [HF137](#), told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 2 that there are 600 veteran-owned businesses registered with the state. Under the bill, veterans would be added to the list of targeted groups who receive a percent break when the state considers purchasing contracts. The list now includes women, specific minorities and people with substantial physical disabilities.

"This is the first stroke in completing the picture created by the 22 initiatives the governor has put forward dealing with veterans issues," Haws said. "When we're done, Minnesota will be painted as a veterans-friendly state." Gov. Tim Pawlenty has recommended a \$74.8 million military and veterans support package.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), who worked with a task force to develop the bill, said

some small-business owners who are members of the National Guard and end up deployed have come back to find "their business in shambles."

The division approved the bill. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

A companion bill, [SF255](#), sponsored by [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), was passed 66-0 by the Senate Feb. 8.

CONSUMERS

Call center transparency

Customers placing or receiving phone calls from service call centers could have more information about where a call center is located, under a bill approved Feb. 2 by the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Rep. Terry Morrow reads an e-mail which television and Internet viewers of the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division were able to submit during the division's Feb. 2 hearing on a proposed bill that would impose requirements on customer sales and service centers.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF116](#) would give a customer the right to know the state or country where the call center employee is located. Additionally, a customer dealing with an internationally located service center that requests a person's financial, credit or identifying information would have the right to request an alternative option of contacting a United States center, if one is available.

"Basically all I'm doing here is asking the call center operator to tell the truth," Atkins said. If a consumer call center doesn't have a stateside location, the consumer will have to decide whether to take the risk of disclosing information, he said.

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) asked about language that would allow a person to be charged with fraud for failing to comply.

Atkins said the bottom line is that charges could apply to businesses operating in Minnesota, but it would be difficult to prosecute someone outside the state or internationally.

Requirements in the bill could result in poor customer service by having to reroute calls to another center and could reflect poorly on a business, said Tom Hesse, vice president of government affairs for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

The committee held an interactive discussion with television and Internet viewers to allow for e-mail comments. One response indicated that the issue is more federal and international than state-related. Another stated the bill doesn't go far enough in protecting consumers.

The bill's next stop is the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

A Senate companion, [SF162](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

CRIME

Increased booking fees

There is no getting out of jail free in Minnesota.

Anyone currently booked into a county or regional jail is charged a \$10 fee. Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), [HF161](#) proposes the fee increase to \$25.

When the fee was set in 1997 it was inadequate, and with continually rising costs it's even more so, Haws told the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 1. Approved by the committee, the bill awaits action by the House Public Safety Finance Division.

Currently counties and cities pay the county

and regional jails anywhere from \$35 to \$75 per booking. This has forced many local governments to raise taxes to cover costs.

Haws also said that a booking fee increase could free up tax money that could be used to support law enforcement and put more police on the street.

Dakota County Chief Deputy David Bellows reported that last year the county booked more than 13,000 people and collected \$30,000 in fees, while the total cost of incarcerating these people was about \$100,000. The difference fell on taxpayers in the form of higher property taxes, said Bellows.

Bellows also requested an amendment to state if someone is acquitted or has charges dropped — making them eligible for a refund — the jails would only have to return the booking fee to people “upon their request.” Current statute holds the jails responsible for notifying those who are eligible for refunds, causing a drain on county resources, said Bellows. The amendment did not pass.

[Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris) sponsors a companion bill, [SF323](#), which has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Slowing down scrap metal theft

The epidemic of copper and wiring theft around the state is taking its toll.

In response, the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee approved [HF457](#), which would help law enforcement agencies apprehend and prosecute scrap metal thieves, and sent it to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

The bill, sponsored by [Rep. Paul Gardner](#) (DFL-Shoreview), calls for scrap metal dealers to keep records of purchases and report the information to local authorities upon request; install and maintain video surveillance cameras; and pay for all scrap metal by check.

This rash of robberies, which has resulted in major gas leaks and explosions, also poses serious public safety issues that must be addressed. “In my 29 years of experience in the fire department I have not seen a more dangerous phenomenon as the one we are facing right now,” said St. Paul Fire Chief Douglas Holton.

Under the bill, it would be a felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, to intentionally and without consent damage, take, remove, sever or break any line or attached apparatus that transmits or distributes electricity or gas.

Tom Deegan, manager of the problem property unit for the city of Minneapolis, showed pictures of houses damaged by fire or water damage as a result of materials being



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Paul Gardner gets a firsthand look at a burnt-out home in North Minneapolis Jan. 6, where the copper pipes had been removed by suspected thieves. Gardner is sponsoring a bill designed to curb the theft of copper from vacant homes, utilities and construction sites. It would also regulate scrap metal recyclers.

ripped out of homes. In one residence, thieves stole piping and a water meter, flooding the basement and causing thousands of dollars of damage.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) raised concerns about how this legislation could cause some scrap metal and salvage yards to go out of business, and the need for a more a thorough examination of the fiscal impact.

A companion bill, [SF443](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

A second bill dealing with the problem is expected to be heard by the committee at a later date. Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF584](#) calls for increased penalties for wiring and piping theft that result in injury or death. It has no Senate companion.

Violence hits close to home

Protecting victims of domestic violence is not simply a matter of getting them away from a bad situation. It's about providing technical and emotional support after they've gone.

This was the message witnesses gave to the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 8. No action was taken.

Dorian Eder, representing the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, said that when a woman places a 911 call about an incident of domestic violence, there are at least 13 steps of bureaucracy to go through. If the case involves children and housing issues, there could be

as many as 50. This is why, Eder said, it's important to provide the resources to navigate the system.

Eder acknowledged that even with current resources, they can not help everyone. In 2006, 20 women lost their lives due to domestic violence, and more than 58,500 women were served by battered women programs.

“My sister was the 15th woman murdered in the state,” said Vicki Seliger-Swenson as she testified about her sister, Terri Lee.

Lee was attacked by her former boyfriend last July, after she ended their relationship. Lee notified the police and obtained a restraining order, which he violated. Lee then asked police to arrest him, but they did not.

On Sept. 22, the boyfriend broke into Lee's home and shot her and a friend, while her two daughters ran to a neighbor's house and her two sons hid in a closet.

Seliger-Swenson asked the committee to closely examine the system in place to protect women and children. “My sister, my family, we are proof that [domestic violence] can happen to anyone,” she said.

According to a coalition report, presented by Carla Ferrucci, director of public policy and system change, “An abusive relationship that ends in the murder of the victim illustrates the failure of our systems and society to respond to the needs of battered women and abused children.”

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

Housing short-term offenders

The cost of housing short-term offenders is straining the relationship between the state and county governments.

A 2003 law shifted the responsibility of housing short-term offenders from the state to the counties. If an offender is given a prison sentence of less than six months, or if an offender violates their probation and has less than six months to serve, he or she will serve out their time in a county jail.

Since the law's enactment, this arrangement has saved the [Department of Corrections](#) approximately \$19 million.

When this law took effect, the state provided support to the counties at a rate of \$12 per day. That amount has since decreased to \$9. However, housing an inmate averages \$55 a day.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's latest budget proposal would raise the state's contribution to \$30 per day.

County officials say that's not good enough.

"We all hear a lot about tax relief and tax reform, but it gets down to tax responsibility and who will take care of the issues that have been identified," Olmsted County Commissioner Paul Wilson told the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 1. Over the last four years, he said Olmsted County has absorbed more than \$900,000 in additional inmate costs. The impact to its budget led the county to lay off five probation agents and delay more than 5 miles of highway improvements.

The committee took no action.

Deputy Corrections Commissioner Dennis Benson also sees a logistical problem. With inmates in 87 different county facilities, the department cannot effectively manage prisoners, nor can it provide adequate re-entry services, said Benson.

Rice County Attorney Paul Beaumaster said this legislation provides a way for some offenders to manipulate the system. Some will plead guilty to lesser crimes so they can serve their time in a county jail rather than a state prison, while others have tried to prolong their court proceedings knowing that they will get credit for time served, and do the remainder of their sentence in county jail.

There is something wrong when offenders can determine where they do their sentence, Beaumaster said.

EDUCATION

School levy modifications

[Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), the sponsor of [HF3](#), gave an informational

overview of the legislation that would modify school district levies Feb. 6 to the House K-12 Finance Division, which took no action.

"Skyrocketing property taxes are a huge, huge concern, and are a top priority in the House. Property taxes have gone from \$4.6 billion in 2002 to \$6.8 billion in 2007," he said.

The bill would modify market value property tax credit computations and increase property tax refunds for homeowners and renters. In addition, senior deferral eligibility and city and county aid would be increased.

According to an analyst with the House Fiscal Analysis Department, Greg Crowe, if a school district passes an operating levy in a property-rich district it would see little if any relief; however, property-poor schools would see a significant relief.

"I want to caution the members that we need to keep in mind that the state is paying for more of the levies, we're just shifting taxes again," said [Rep. Randy Demmer](#) (R-Hayfield). With more money coming from the state to pay for school levies, there is a shift from property taxes to other taxes.

"We have to keep in mind it's taxpayer dollars. The temptation is that when we are using the company checkbook maybe it is easier to go out and spend then when we have to use our own checkbook," Demmer said.

A companion bill, [SF349](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Pre-kindergarten assessments

Half of the children entering kindergarten are assessed as not ready for school by their teachers.

On Feb. 1 Deb Swenson-Klatt, child development services manager with the Department of Human Services gave the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division an overview of early childhood assessment testing. No action was taken.

"Child assessment, from our perspective, is an ongoing process of collecting and interpreting information about children's development," she said.

According to Swenson-Klatt, not being ready for kindergarten means skill, knowledge, behavior and accomplishment are not yet demonstrated or are demonstrated on an intermittent basis.

However, 82 percent of children attending accredited child care facilities are assessed as being ready for kindergarten, according to Swenson-Klatt. Children from lower income and minority families perform at the same level as white children when they attend early childhood schools.

Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti) questioned

if the assessments differentiate between boys and girls. "Are we recognizing the difference between how boys and girls learn? Or are we starting these boys on a path of failure right out the chute?"

Eastlund said boys are four times more likely to be labeled as having a learning disability or having emotional problems, and are more likely to be placed on the drug Ritalin. "We are seeing young men achieve less and less, here at the earliest entry point we're labeling them not ready," he said.

Dr. Karen Effrem, a pediatrician who serves on the board of EdWatch, also had problems with the gender assessments and the system overall.

"If you look at the term on the assessment test that says 'empathy and caring for others,' that's good to know. But little children don't do that very well. Speaking as a pediatrician, boys do that a lot less well than girls."

Does more money equal results?

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's [budget proposal](#) calls for an additional \$37.9 million in early childhood assistance, but not everyone is convinced that extra money will equate to greater success.

Education Commissioner Alice Seagren told the House E-12 Education Committee Feb. 1 that the proposal calls for \$28.9 million to provide families of at-risk children resources and support to ensure the child is ready for kindergarten, and another \$9 million to improve the quality of early childhood programming. The committee took no action.

Dr. Karen Effrem, a pediatrician and EdWatch board member, testified that money spent on early childhood programs in other states has had little to no effect on results.

"Georgia has spent \$1 billion over the last 10 years and there has been no improvement in test scores. Oklahoma has universal preschool and their test scores have gone down," she said.

"Europe has universal preschool programs, but American students until fourth grade test higher in math, science and reading. It's not until eighth and 12th grade where they test worst and are on the bottom of the academic heap. That suggests there are more problems in K-12 than preschool," she said.

Others disagree.

"Currently Minnesota spends \$147 million for early care education programs, or less than 1 percent of the state's \$32 billion biennial budget," said Zoe Nichol, public policy director of Ready 4K. "Five-year-old children will have completed at least 75 percent of their brain development, but will have experienced

less than 5 percent of the public investments in education that will be made between birth and age 23.”

Her organization’s vision is to bring school readiness for kindergartners up to 100 percent from the current 50 percent.

Using its defined terms, [Education Department](#) statistics show that 40 percent of children entering kindergarten are “in process” of readiness, and 10 percent are not yet ready.

“If your child is in the 10 percent not ready or 40 percent not ready, is that acceptable? It’s not acceptable. I hope we don’t talk about percents, because every child needs to be ready,” said [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd), a former teacher.

All-day kindergarten

Voluntary full-day kindergarten would be funded, under several bills heard by a House division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Marsha Swails](#) (DFL-Woodbury), [HF2](#) is one of five bills brought before the committee that would approve funding. Half-day kindergarten funding is currently provided by the state, but if a parent wants their child to attend full-day kindergarten they can do it at their own cost.

The bills were all held over for possible inclusion in the House K-12 Finance Division’s omnibus bill.

“As a teacher I believe that this is the best way we can invest in our future,” said Swails, who teaches AP English at Woodbury High School. She said the total cost if each child in the state was to attend full-day, every-day kindergarten would be \$143 million each year.

The difference between the five bills was funding mechanisms, including implementation length and using a sliding scale. Other members sponsoring bills are: [Rep. Robin Brown](#) (DFL-Austin), [Rep. Denise Dittrich](#) (DFL-Champlin), [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) and [Rep. Terry Morrow](#) (DFL-St. Peter).

“Research shows that all-day every day kindergarten leads to higher academic achievement and reduced achievement gaps between students of different economic and racial groups,” said Karen Kelly-Ariwoola, interim president and CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation.

She said that 30 states already provide all-day kindergarten, including Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. According to the United Health Foundation, those states rank in the bottom 10 for high school graduation rates, yet each has all-day kindergarten.

Seven of the 18 states that offer just half-day

kindergarten, including Minnesota, are in the top 10 in terms of graduating students on time from high school.

A companion bill, [SF174](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Benchmark burdens

Education standards are an essential guideline for teachers to know what the state wants students to learn. Benchmarks, the second half of standards, are a burden that turns thinking and evaluation into memorizing and trivia.

Or at least that is what Micheal J. Thompson and Adam Copeland believe.

Copeland, an Eagan High School social studies teacher, shared an example of a benchmark he thinks is a little off the mark Feb. 6 with the House E-12 Education Committee, which took no action.

One of the world history standards is on Eastern Hemisphere empires and their interactions and trade patterns. The second benchmark on the standard is about African kingdoms including Songhai. Examples of terms that should be learned in the benchmark are Kush, Ibn Battuta, King Ezana and Bantu migrations. “Do we need to know about Songhai? I would say only about 10 people in Minnesota are from that region in Africa. That is what benchmarks do. They take trivialities and make them essential,” he said.

Copeland recommends that the focus be taken off benchmarks, and that standards should apply to all public schools including magnet, charter and alternative schools.

Thompson, the director of secondary curriculum for the St. Paul Public Schools, has a problem with the benchmarks that are built into the standards. “To meet all the benchmarks you would need a K-22 school system.”

Thompson brought his daughter’s 4 pound, 6 ounce history textbook and compared it with a 1 pound, 3 ounce European equivalent.

“Even though our book is quite a bit bigger, the European students score higher — they are able to go deeper into subjects,” he said. “Students in America cover double the amount of math than the Japanese and Germans, yet they know it better than we do.”

International Baccalaureate success

The term “success” sometimes gets lost in the education debate. When the topic of education comes up the conversation often leads to the need for more funding, higher standards and closing the achievement gap.

Successful educational programs were the

subject on Feb. 5 in the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division, which heard testimony from members of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program at Sandburg Middle School in Robbinsdale. The division took no action.

Lauren Hildebrand, program coordinator, said there are 170 schools in the United States offering the program, but just one in Minnesota, although 15 more are in process of certification.

According to the International Baccalaureate Organization Web site, “It is a programme of international education designed to help students develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills necessary to participate actively and responsibly in a changing world.”

It is a choice school that emphasizes how to learn and how to critically evaluate information, not just teaching facts. Students study subjects from each of the eight subject groups through the “five areas of interaction.”

Approaches to learning, community and service, homo faber (processes and products of human creativity), environment, and health and social education are all incorporated into each subject. Foreign language must be taken each year.

“A student must complete a community service project of a minimum of 10 hours in sixth grade and a project in seventh and eighth grade must be completed for graduation,” Hildebrand said. “Most students do more than the minimum.”

Linda Kerandi, a seventh-grade student, chose the program because of the rigorous course work. “I wanted to be challenged; I get satisfaction out of solving hard things,” she said.

Kerandi’s community service project was helping her native Liberia recover from its civil war. “We raised money and acquired school supplies for an orphanage there; many of the children’s parents had died.”

Harvard University recently chose the program as one of four worldwide for a groundbreaking study of exemplary education programs.

ELECTIONS

Faster reporting deadlines

Reporting deadlines and campaign contribution limits would change under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 1.

[HF237](#) would require certain contributions to be reported within 24 hours to the [Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board](#); current law requires 48 hours. Approved by the committee, it awaits action by the full House.

[Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), the bill's sponsor, said it would cast light on the reporting process that is now easy to circumvent by political committees. Faster reporting creates greater transparency in elections on how candidates spend and receive money, he said.

The bill would require the treasurer of a political committee, political fund, principal campaign committee or party unit to register with the board within 14 days of making or receiving more than \$100. In addition, the board would need to be notified within 24 hours of a political committee receiving a loan or contribution to a candidate from any one source totaling \$800 or more, or to a candidate in any judicial district or legislative election for more than \$400, if the loan or contribution is made between the last day included in the final financial report before an election and Election Day.

Reporting would have to be done in person or by electronic means, and the board would be required to post the report on its Web site within 24 hours. Currently, the reporting limit is \$2,000 for contributions to candidates in statewide elections, and it can be reported by telegram or certified mail.

Morgan said new political committees currently have 14 days to register.

"More disclosure is a good thing," testified Mike Franklin, director of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's Energy & Elections Policy and Political Action Committee.

Other proposed changes include increased contribution limits for secretary of state and state auditor candidates, and candidates using the public subsidy program would have to submit an affidavit showing contributions before a primary.

A companion bill, [SF123](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), passed the Senate 61-0 Feb. 7.

EMPLOYMENT

Overtime with free food

An offer of a free meal to employees working overtime at the five [Minnesota Veterans Homes](#) turned into a discussion about the policy of mandatory overtime, and questions about staffing.

Nurses at the homes are frequently asked to work overtime, and [HF291](#), sponsored

by [Rep. A. Willie Dominguez](#) (DFL-Mpls), would allow for a free meal at the home's cafeteria for those working a second shift consecutive with a regularly scheduled shift. The companion, SF683, is sponsored by Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes (DFL-Winona). It has been referred to the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Mary Jo George, government affairs staff specialist for the Minnesota Nursing Association, told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 2 that when people are asked to work overtime, it is usually unexpected and they have not prepared food. "We think this is a simple gesture."

Charles Cox, Minnesota Veterans Homes Board interim executive director, calculated the annual cost of the benefit to be approximately \$5,000. It would also be available to other staff members working overtime "as a way of saying thank you."

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) said the free-meal-for-overtime policy could open up a floodgate of similar requests from state employees. But he has an issue with the mandatory overtime policy as well.

"If we are asking nurses who are crucial to the welfare of our veterans over at the home board to work overtime, how effective can their service be after 16 hours?" he said.

George said there is a perception among the nurses at the homes that there is an overuse of overtime.

"We have a state law that allows private sector nurses to say no to overtime if they feel unsafe," and the nurses would like to see that policy extended to those working at the veterans homes, she said. "We think it is a different issue for a different bill. But we would like to see some limits on it."

The bill was approved by the division with the understanding that the language would be specific to the veterans homes. It now moves to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Cellulosic biofuels

Cellulosic fuels made from biomass will likely replace corn-based ethanol as the preferred alternative to petroleum-based fuels, an expert told a House division.

Robert Elde, dean of the University of Minnesota's College of Biological Sciences, was one of several researchers to testify Feb. 1 at an informational hearing on cellulosic biofuels for the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. No action was taken.

Elde said the biofuel industry has to look beyond corn and soybeans as renewable fuel sources, citing a 2006 report that found that devoting the entire U.S. corn and soybean crops to biofuel would satisfy only 12 percent of the country's gasoline demand and 6 percent of its diesel demand.

"We're staring down what is emerging as a food vs. fuel conflict," he said.

Instead of using food crops, Elde said future biofuels would utilize the energy latent in biomass — organic material that can come from a wide variety of plants and/or animal waste.

Citing intense competition both from other states and internationally, Elde said that Minnesota would have to fund cellulosic biofuel research initiatives if it wants to reap the full economic benefits of the burgeoning industry.

John Sheehan, senior strategic analyst for the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, said it might take 20 to 50 years for cellulosic fuels to reach their full potential.

"There are a lot of near-term opportunities, but we've got to keep our eye on the prize in terms of how long it's really going to take to build this industry," Sheehan said.

Noise standards for racetracks

A bill that would protect motor vehicle racetracks from civil lawsuits relating to noise standards was approved by a House committee.

[HF415](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin), was crafted in response to a situation involving the Deer Creek Speedway in Spring Valley. A group of private citizens filed a civil lawsuit against the speedway, alleging that it violated a statute on noise standards. The bill would exempt the speedway from both the statute and any current or future lawsuits based on the statute.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill Feb. 6. It now goes to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

Current state law exempts all racetracks built before 1983 from the noise standards statute. The bill would modify the exemption to include all tracks built before 1996, thereby exempting Deer Creek Speedway and two other tracks.

The second part of the bill would apply to all of the state's racetracks, and would protect them from lawsuits based on the noise standards statute.

Randy Queensland, owner of the Deer Creek Speedway, said that he and other racetrack owners were "fearful to function and operate with the constant threat" of a

civil lawsuit forcing their tracks to close. He added that he has recently reduced the amount of noise generated by the racecars and erected a large wall between the track and its nearest residence.

Debbie Goettelman, one of the 15 neighbors who brought the lawsuit against the speedway, testified that its presence and the noise it produces greatly reduced the quality of life for residents living nearby. She also said the track has a negative impact on the surrounding environment.

[Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul) tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by taking out the provision that exempts racetracks from civil lawsuits.

"I'd hate to predetermine or pre-decide for every community whether or not they should have their day in court," Mariani said.

A companion bill, [SF311](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

GAME & FISH

Bow hunting fees

Fees that bow hunters from out of state pay to hunt deer in Minnesota can be significantly higher than those paid by state residents. A new bill would create a flat fee for everyone.

[HF128](#), sponsored by [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), would modify a provision in state law relating to nonresident hunting fees. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division laid the bill over Feb. 5 for possible inclusion into its omnibus bill.

Currently, non-Minnesotans who wish to hunt deer inside the state must pay a fee of either \$135 or an amount equal to the license fees and surcharges that they would pay in their own state — whichever is greater.

Pelowski said that Minnesota enacted the rule in 2004 in response to Iowa raising its deer hunting fees for nonresident archers. He added that the issue was brought to him by a group of his constituents, one of whom said the current law forced one non-Minnesotan to shell out \$396 for a license.

Ed Boggess, deputy director of the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Fish and Wildlife, said the nonresident fee for bow hunters is the only "reciprocal" hunting license fee in state law. He also said the DNR supports the bill.

A companion bill, [SF262](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

GOVERNMENT

More CAAPB members

House and Senate members representing the district in which the State Capitol is located would be added as members to the [Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board](#), under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 1.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF203](#) would increase to 12 the board membership that already includes the lieutenant governor, four gubernatorial appointees, three St. Paul mayoral appointees and two Legislative appointees.

Mariani said that adding the district members to the board would help coordinate planning efforts with neighborhood groups. It creates a, "real time, on-time ability to shape the decisions of the CAAPB."

The board is responsible for preservation issues within a 60-block area including the Capitol.

"We always welcome additional eyes and support," said Paul Mandell, principal planner on the board.

[Rep. Sarah Anderson](#) (R-Plymouth) questioned the need for the change when three St. Paul mayoral appointees are already board members. Mariani said adding the district legislators allows for legislative influence before decisions are made, rather than after the fact.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF118](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

Credit card usage

When paying for services from the state, people may wonder why they can't often use a credit card.

A task force commissioned to find a solution didn't come up with a clear answer.

Keith Carlson, executive director of the Minnesota Inter-County Association, laid out the findings of the Credit Card Task Force to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 7. The committee took no action.

Carlson said that nearly 45 percent of all transactions in the United States are made by methods other than cash.

Minnesota government has been slow to respond to this changing trend. "Roughly 1 percent of the state's \$26 billion of annual revenue comes from credit cards," said Carlson.

One of the main roadblocks is the credit card industry.

For "face-to-face transactions," the industry bans vendors from tacking on additional charges. This means that the processing cost for each transaction must be absorbed by the state and local governments.

Also, if a fee or charge is dictated by statute, the government can't adjust pricing to recover the cost of accepting credit or debit cards, said Carlson.

Although the task force did not reach a consensus, it did have several recommendations: forming partnerships between local and state governments to maximize negotiating power with credit card companies, assessing additional fees to offset the costs of "face-to-face" transactions, or amending state statute that would require state agencies to absorb the costs of transaction fees.

Nonprofit firefighter groups added

Nonprofit firefighter corporations would be added to the list of governmental units able to buy goods at set prices, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 7.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine), [HF465](#) adds "independent nonprofit firefighter corporations" to the list of already designated groups that obtain equipment through a state bidding process that allows for the best possible price for purchasing goods. Designated state groups include: every city, county, town, school district, political subdivisions, University of Minnesota and nonprofit hospitals.

There are between 80 and 100 nonprofit fire corporations in the state with the majority in the Arrowhead Region, said Nyle Zikmund, chief of the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department. "We're simply seeking that same latitude enjoyment of buying off those state contracts," he said.

There was no opposition to the bill, and it now goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

A companion bill, [SF321](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the full Senate.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A health care option for farmers

It could become easier for self-employed farmers to receive [MinnesotaCare](#).

[HF276](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie), would allow farmers to include depreciation rates of

equipment, buildings and other assets when determining MinnesotaCare eligibility. Approved Feb. 6 by the House Health and Human Services Committee, the bill next goes to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

"For six years, people have gone without insurance because they couldn't add back the depreciation loss," Otremba said.

Currently, the federal government allows farmers to deduct depreciation from their gross income, allowing some eligibility to federal government assistance. MinnesotaCare removed that option, which limited farmers' access to state health care.

A companion bill, [SF75](#), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

A boost for family planning

A multifaceted bill aimed at increasing funding, reimbursement rates and negotiating power for family planning clinics and providers was approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 6 and routed to the House Finance Committee.

[Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), the sponsor of [HF298](#), said the measure provides a much-needed boost for clinics serving "young women starting out in the workforce, often without health insurance. This is often the entire medical care that they get."

According to Peg LaBore, director of Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul, family planning services is to help prevent unintended pregnancies and/or help families pace their reproductive future. Clinics that provide family planning also play key roles in women's health by offering tests for sexually transmitted diseases, annual exams and counseling should an unplanned pregnancy occur.

State funding for family planning has decreased by approximately \$2.5 million since 2003, and clinics are bracing for a 48 percent cut scheduled for implementation on July 1, 2007.

The bill would eliminate proposed cuts and provide an additional \$8 million in funding per biennium. It would also increase reimbursement rates for clinics that accept family planning waivers, known as 1115 waivers, and raises reimbursements for community clinics by 25 percent. It would also give clinics power to negotiate drug costs, allow registered nurses to dispense contraceptives and seek to include STD testing and treatment under family planning waivers.

Heated discussion surrounded an unsuccessful amendment first offered by [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud), which sought to prohibit the use of state funds for abortions. According to Huntley, the state attorney general declared a similar amendment unconstitutional last year.

"This is the very situation where this amendment belongs," argued [Rep. Tom](#)

[Emmer](#) (R-Delano), who introduced the amendment after it was withdrawn by Gottwalt.

A companion bill, [SF184](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

MinnesotaCare access

A bill that would grant small-business employers access to [MinnesotaCare](#) was approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 6 and referred to the House Finance Committee.

[HF463](#) would allow employers with two to 50 employees to buy into the state-sponsored health care program, MinnesotaCare, as long as they contribute half of the premium costs and don't already supply 75 percent of their staff with insurance. Employees covered by the policy would not be subject to eligibility limits, but would be bound to restrictions in the program's benefits, including a \$10,000 hospitalization cap.

"Since the passage of MinnesotaCare in 1992, the Legislature has wrestled with the question of coverage for small employers, and we have yet to find a satisfactory solution," said [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill's sponsor. "It's an issue I heard a lot about this summer."

Some committee members expressed concern that the hospitalization cap could force employees into bankruptcy following extended hospital stays. Several legislators were also worried about adding additional people to a program they say is already a financial burden for the state.

"The more we as a committee, and as a body, load up MinnesotaCare, the more we hasten the demise of the program that's been a stopgap for so many," said [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka).

A companion bill, [SF66](#), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. Its sponsor is [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick).



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Peg LaBore, from left, Judy Kloop and Denise Anderson from Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul testify before the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 6 in support of a bill designed to prevent unintended pregnancies by increasing access to family planning.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University budget request

In its [biennial budget request](#), University of Minnesota officials factored in a 4.5 percent tuition increase in each of the next two years. But if Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget recommendation comes to fruition, that might be wishful thinking.

The university is seeking a \$182.3 million increase to its base budget in the next biennium. Pawlenty is recommending \$90.4

million, not including a \$25 million one-time performance bonus.

"You can do much better than his recommendation," University President Robert Bruininks told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Feb. 6. No action was taken.

Almost \$99 million of the request is to sustain quality and competitiveness. Of that, \$67 million is for faculty and staff compensation, including a 3.25 percent annual salary increase; \$24.9 million is to advance education; and \$6.9 million is for technological innovations to upgrade learning and research.

Looking ahead, the university seeks \$28.5 million to help address competitive market pressures.

Every year, 60-75 of the university's most talented staff members have a chance to join other schools or enter into private business, Bruininks said. "Our faculty compensation is now ranked about 27th nationally when it comes to the top 30 research universities."

Nearly \$28 million would go toward preparing the next generation of health care professionals; \$15.6 million toward areas of highest growth potential, such as nanotechnology; and \$11.5 million would be used to bring faculty together to implement innovative solutions to urgent environmental problems, such as the development of renewable energy.

"We're in a difficult spot when (the governor) shorts you \$90 million and we need to find it, if we think your request is reasonable," said [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park).

If the final number is closer to the governor, Bruininks said it would be hard to recommend to the Board of Regents that tuition, which has increased 42.7 percent in the past four fiscal years, go up just the projected 4.5 percent annually.

"Our students and families have been through too much, so we'd make other sacrifices," he said.

MnSCU budget request

The [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#) system produces nearly two-thirds of all Minnesota undergraduates, 80 percent of whom stay in the state.

Now, the system would like more state money.

The system is seeking an additional \$177 million for the upcoming biennium. Its current base appropriation is \$1.2 billion.

"This request is critical for meeting our strategic goals and enabling the system to make strong contributions toward meeting Minnesota's challenges," David Paskach, chair of the MnSCU Board of Trustees, told

the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Feb. 7. No action was taken.

Included in the budget request is a 4 percent annual tuition increase – the system's lowest since 1999. That amounts to \$165 per year.

Chancellor James McCormick said it is the board's intention to cap tuition increases at 4 percent, even if the budget request is not fully funded.

"Students are paying 88 percent more than they did in 2000," McCormick said. "These increases were triggered largely by cuts in state funding during that period. Today, our system receives 23 percent less in state funding for full-time equivalent students than in 2000 in inflation-adjusted dollars."

The request addresses four strategic components, as set forth by the board: access, opportunity and success; academic innovations; technology infrastructure; and inflationary costs.

In terms of access, the system seeks \$24 million to help better prepare students, encourage their enrollment and provide services to continually help them on their route to graduation, such as academic tutors and financial aid assistance.

The request also includes \$70 million for technology improvements, \$57 million for inflation and \$10 million to help staff create innovations that advance excellence and efficiency; and \$3 million for health care education, which, in part, would permit an additional 950 nurses to graduate during the biennium, a 25 percent increase, to help meet the state's needs.

HOUSING

Standardize tenant screening

Opinions are split over the value of [HF166](#), which would standardize a screening form for landlords that charge potential tenants for background and other checks.

"Many of your constituents are paying fees that can approach a month's rent," [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill's sponsor, told members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division Feb. 7. "All my bill does is apply for a uniform application that landlords can use that's current and accurate."

Under the bill, the screening fee would be no more than \$50, and the tenant report would be valid for 60 days.

However, the bill failed to garner division approval. It has no Senate companion.

Jack Horner, who represents the Minnesota Multi Housing Association, described a

similar program attempted by one of his colleagues that, due to lack of interest and other barriers, ultimately failed.

"After a great deal of time and effort, he finally abandoned the project," he said. "Landlords have different standards. The only ones who would use it would be the ones with spotty records."

Others opposed to the legislation expressed concern that a form valid for 60 days may quickly become obsolete due to infractions, such as a criminal act or more credit spending, and that the form could be forged.

"There's an unbelievable problem with check forgery and forgery in general," said Coon Rapids Police Officer Terry Thomson. "And a person's criminal history can change in 24 hours."

Lesch argued that potentially bad tenants could likely be identified from information already on the form.

"In 90 percent of the cases, when you have a problem tenant, you'll see it on his history," he said.

INSURANCE

Insurance for steam plant employees

Steam plant workers once employed by the University of Minnesota would be added to the State Employee Group Insurance Plan, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 7.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF222](#) would allow approximately 25 Foster Wheeler Twin Cities Inc. employees to purchase individual or dependent benefits through the state plan upon retirement.

The employees were transferred in 1992 from the University of Minnesota to the private company. While certain retiree benefits were established through the state at the time, retiree health care benefits were not "thought of," said Thomas Koehler, business manager for Local Union 160, which represents the workers. Now as employees are eligible to retire, they are realizing they don't have these benefits.

The state employee plan allows a certain number of non-governmental employees to be included, but adding the 25 new members "could default us out of a governmental program," said Nathan Moracco, plan manager with the [Department of Employee Relations](#). Although currently some quasi-governmental groups such as the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota State Fair board are included, these employees are from a private company, he said.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) asked why the employees are not seeking the retiree health benefits from the university instead.

Koehler said the university plan isn't an option because they don't have a collective bargaining agreement with the institution.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) said if the state approves the benefit for this private group, it opens the door for others to do the same. She referenced the city of Duluth, currently facing problems funding health care benefits for retired city employees.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF104](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

LAW

Defamation and privacy laws

Current law prohibits Minnesota residents from filing charges against non-residents or foreign corporations for acts of defamation or invasion of privacy.

Speaking before the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 1, [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the current statute is out of date and out of touch with today's technology.

Thissen, the sponsor of [HF117](#), said that the last time a case addressing this issue was brought before the [Court of Appeals](#), the court invited the Legislature to reevaluate current statute, in light of the growing power of the Internet.

There have been four published cases brought before the court, and additional cases may never have gotten to court because of the specific language in the law, said Thissen.

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

A companion bill, [SF181](#), sponsored by [Sen.](#)

[Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Ticket scalping goes legit?

A valid contract is an agreement between a willing seller and a willing buyer. If someone wants to sell a ticket to an event to a willing buyer and both agree on a price and the conditions, why is this illegal?

This is one of the points [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) made to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 1 as he presented [HF189](#), which calls for the repeal of a law making ticket scalping illegal.

The current law makes reselling tickets illegal, but without explanation as to why or how reselling tickets is an affront to public policy, DeLaForest said.

DeLaForest further argued that there are brokers making millions of dollars by selling tickets underground and on the Internet. By making ticket scalping legal, this revenue could be brought into the economy. "We're missing tax revenue right now by not legalizing this activity," he said.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), co-sponsor of the bill, said one of her concerns is the waste of public resources. She spoke about police preparations for the 1987 World Series and the 2001 NCAA Final Four, and how in both instances, police prepared intensively to locate and arrest ticket scalpers when attention could have been focused on more serious crimes.

The point was also made that the current law is unnecessary government interference. "The buyer values a ticket more than the money given up to the seller, and the seller values the money more than the ticket," Kahn said. "What is the benefit of society interfering with this exchange?"

[Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) proposed an amendment to keep current language pertaining to consumer protection. The amendment was not voted on, but DeLaForest suggested the issue be addressed at the bill's next stop, the House Commerce and Labor Committee, where it was referred without recommendation.

A companion bill, [SF372](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), was scheduled to be heard Feb. 8 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

administrator on staff, making planning for the future somewhat difficult.

Approved Feb. 7 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, [HF281](#) proposes the creation of regional development commissions to assist local communities in planning and development. Its next stop is the House Finance Committee.

[Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the bill's sponsor, said the legislation would provide much needed support for mayors, city councils and school boards throughout the state and help them find ways to improve their communities and develop their resources.

Looking at the beneficial role these commissions can play, [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) said that the very survival for many of the smaller cities in Minnesota depends on a plan for the future. "But, they need assistance to do that," he said.

This is also a way to help smaller communities become more effective and save needed tax dollars, Moe said.

The bill calls for \$900,000 in appropriations, with annual grants of \$75,000 to each regional development commission. Each granted dollar would require a non-state match.

A companion bill, [SF166](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls) has been sent to the Senate Finance Committee.

METRO AFFAIRS

Crime challenge in the Twin Cities

"The challenge is clear: violent crime continues to plague our city," said Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak as he outlined public safety issues during a combined hearing of the House Public Safety Finance Division and the Senate Public Safety Budget Committee Feb. 6. No action was taken.

The causes of crime are complex, Rybak said. They include concentrated poverty; a breakdown of family structure; felons in prison since the 1990s on the street again; illegal guns; a culture of violence; and increasingly hopeless youth. He said the problems have been compounded by significant state and federal budget cuts.

Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan said, "The most immediate and powerful tool in our crime fighting strategy is to increase the visibility of police officers on the street."

He said the city has made investments to help address the rising crime issue. These include: more prosecutors in precincts, leading to an increase in prosecutions; and the creation of a juvenile crime unit, which has resulted in a marked decrease in gang activity.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Mitchell Davis Jr., director of the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health at the Department of Health, along with Assistant Health Commissioner Margaret Kelly, testifies Feb. 6 before the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Helping local communities plan

Eighty percent of the cities in Minnesota have a population of fewer than 2,500 people. Many of them don't have a full-time

Proud of the fact that St. Paul's crime rate dropped 11 percent last year, Mayor Chris Coleman said that violence and drugs are still serious problems. Although there is a need for more officers, he said it will also take other types of policing and community resources. "Prevention is more than parks and libraries, and enforcement is more than just police."

St. Paul Police Chief John Harrington said there was a 10 percent increase in gun possessions last year; gangs continued to be a major problem, and large amounts of drugs poured into the city. Plus, methamphetamine usage is more prevalent than ever, he said.

Legislators commended the officials for their work and commitment to public safety.

[Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul) noted that "everything keeps coming back to the kids," and that if the public safety committees work with the education committees, maybe a solution can be found for some of the issues the children are facing.

MILITARY

Military affairs overview

The [Department of Military Affairs](#) reviewed its legislative initiatives and budget recommendations with the House State Government Finance Division Feb. 6.

The \$41 million recommended by Gov. Tim Pawlenty for the department, would be used for maintenance of training facilities and armories; air base operations; utility maintenance and repair of buildings; a one-time appropriation for special assessments of armories; a reintegration program for returning soldiers; and an enlistment incentives program, said Terrence Palmer, department comptroller.

The government assumed returning Vietnam soldiers wanted to be left alone and, in doing so, failed to make sure soldiers were OK to return to their families and society, said Palmer. The \$1.5 million for the reintegration program would help Minnesota soldiers returning from current deployments with personal and marriage counseling, among other needs, he said.

Commissioning bonuses, the creation of \$1,000 scholarships for 25 outstanding high school seniors who are joining the National Guard, securing recreational funds for Camp Ripley and redistributing monies from the "Support Our Troops" license plates are also on the legislative agenda, said Col. Eric Ahlness, government relations officer of the Minnesota National Guard.

One problem found with the "Support Our

Troops" licensing legislation is that some returning injured soldiers that aren't active duty, but not fully disabled either, are unable to receive the support money intended from the plates' proceeds. A change in current statute would help these soldiers and families, Ahlness said.

The committee took no action.

Firearms safety exemption

Active military personnel and veterans seeking to purchase hunting licenses would be exempt from certain firearm safety requirements, under a bill approved by a House Division Feb. 5.

[HF260](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom), was approved by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division, and now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. It has no Senate companion.

The bill would exempt anyone who has completed basic training in any branch of the U.S. armed forces from the shooting range exercise portion of the state's firearms safety certificate instruction requirements.

"We want to send a clear message to our veterans," Kalin said. "We don't want to tell them that they can be trusted with an M-16 and to lay their lives on the line in combat, but they can't be trusted with a deer rifle in the woods."

He added that he thinks the bill represents a "solid middle ground" between veterans' interests and safety concerns, noting that they would still have to complete the classroom portion of the firearms safety training, which can also be done online.

Chris Woodcock, who served in Iraq as a U.S. Army specialist, testified that he's had trouble obtaining a hunting license because of confusing requirements and instructions.

"I just think it'd be a good choice if we could find something a little bit better to do for our veterans," Woodcock said.

Not everyone fully supports the bill.

Terry Bernier, a military reservist and volunteer firearms safety instructor for the [Department of Natural Resources](#), said shooting range exercises are one of the most important elements of civilian firearms safety training.

"I thought, at one point, that my military training was perfectly adequate for hunting and what I had to do — until I became an instructor," Bernier said, adding that firearms safety training has been hugely successful in decreasing the frequency and severity of hunting accidents.

TAXES

Technical changes

Another tax bill could be considered by the full House.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), [HF496](#) is a [Department of Revenue](#) bill that seeks to improve the tax system by cleaning up and clarifying the language of current statutes and recommends policy positions on either new items or things discovered during audits or when statutes were reviewed.

"We want to take out anything representatives find controversial to make it as easy as possible," she told the House Taxes Committee Feb. 7, which approved the bill and sent it to the House floor.

For example, committee members had concerns with a provision whereby tax preparers' names would be published on the department Web site if they "willfully" prepared two or more tax returns fraudulently, but are not criminally convicted.

John Hagen, manager of the department's Information and Education Section, said in the last three years, 12 preparers were assessed the department's \$500 penalty for fraud.

"This is just a civil penalty," Hagen said. "Criminally you'd have to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that they were a part of the fraudulent scheme. But with 'willful' the burden of proof is a lot less."

[Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) said he was concerned about the separation of powers between the courts, and administrative penalties.

"If the court determines that I'm guilty of something, I have my day in court," he said. "If you have administrative penalties, then you don't have a day in court."

Hagen said the department assesses the penalty, but the preparer has administrative appeal rights. If the preparer doesn't want to go through the administrative appeal he or she can appeal to tax court.

Members ultimately agreed to leave the provision in; however, any provisions with money implications were removed.

A companion bill, [SF610](#), sponsored by [Sen. Thomas Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

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Leading to this moment

Masin brings varied experiences to State Capitol

By **MIKE COOK**

Rep. Sandy Masin (DFL-Eagan) has been around government for more than 20 years. Now it is in a different role.



Rep. Sandy Masin
southern suburbs.

Masin spent nine years with the Minnesota Historical Society in the 1980s, where she led Capitol tours; was a House staffer in 1990-91; was the volunteer coordinator at the Shakopee women's prison from 1991-95; and served on the Eagan City Council from 1993-2000.

The former city council member, community television political moderator, Capitol tour guide and House staff member edged Tim Wilkin, a four-term incumbent, by 57 votes to represent parts of two large

Beginning in 1988, Masin spent nine years talking to politicians on "Legislative Update," produced by Burnsville/Eagan Community Television. There she held regular discussions on issues of the day with legislators serving in St. Paul and Washington D.C.

Transportation might be the largest issue in her district, which includes both Interstate 35E and heavily traveled Cedar Avenue. Many of her constituents also regularly drive nearby Interstate 35W. One of her committee assignments is the House Transportation Finance Division.

"We just need to make headway on getting our transportation systems current," said Masin. She served as chair of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, and helped organize the Suburban Transit Association, a partnership of several suburban transit systems. "When you're in Eagan around rush hour and you look at (Cedar Avenue) and you

| DISTRICT 38A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,636 Largest city: Eagan County: Dakota Top concerns: Transportation and education funding |

look at 35E or into Burnsville on 35W, they're just major parking lots. Public transit, to me, is really important because you can't do it all by cars."

Education funding is something she heard a lot about while door-knocking in a district that is home to three school districts.

She believes that approving some sort of property tax relief will positively impact education, as would providing health care to all youngsters.

"Some of these kids are coming to school with problems that make it difficult for them to learn," she said. "We want the kids to get the most out of their learning experience."

It's the district's office

Morrow continues his dedication to community service

By **SONJA HEGMAN**

Although he is roughly 90 miles from his residence, Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter) never feels far from home in his office. He is collecting items from his district to hang on his office walls.



Rep. Terry Morrow

Morrow decided to run for the House seat after learning that incumbent Rep. Ruth Johnson, who served three non-consecutive terms in office, would not run again. Johnson was a friend and supporter during his campaign, he said.

"It was the passing of the baton," he said.

A resident of St. Peter for 12 years with his wife, Martha, Morrow dedicated himself to community service after a 1998 tornado

"This is the district's office," Morrow said. "I just happen to work here."

Morrow decided to run for the House seat after learning that

damaged the community. He served on the St. Peter Board of Education for several years, including three as board chairman. He also chaired the Minnesota Valley Education District, which provides special education services for seven school districts.

"Minnesota is a place to come together and help others," he said, as well as a good place to raise a family. Morrow has two daughters, Sally, 10, and Maggie, 13. "Each of us has a set of skills and abilities. I still can't believe I have this honor (of serving my district)."

A licensed attorney in California and Minnesota, Morrow teaches communication studies at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter during the fall semester. While in California, he practiced civil litigation, representing corporations and police departments.

The big issues affecting Morrow's district are property taxes, education and health care.

| DISTRICT 23A |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,889 Largest city: North Mankato Counties: Nicollet and Sibley Top concerns: Property taxes, agriculture, education and health care |

But his district is highly agricultural, he said. Property tax increases have hit farms, and limited farm families' income in his district.

With an "enthusiastic" outdoor community in his district, Morrow said there are concerns about a pesticide problem in lakes and rivers. He wants to address those issues during his time in office.

In addition to being vice chairman of the House K-12 Finance Division, Morrow serves on the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee; House Game, Fish and Forestry Division; House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division; and the House Transportation Finance Division.

A community leader

Slocum reluctantly becomes state politician

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

A middle school teacher for nearly 20 years, [Rep. Linda Slocum](#) (DFL-Richfield) was ready for a sabbatical when the opportunity to run for her district seat presented itself.



Rep. Linda Slocum
said.

After some encouragement by others, she reluctantly charted her course. She drove the district boundaries several times before she finally decided to run, she said.

Always active behind the scenes, whether managing campaigns, door-knocking or handing out literature, she never thought she'd actually run for state office. She was raised in a DFL family who believes you are to be involved in your community.

She earned years of experience working

on the Richfield Community Service Commission, served as vice-chairwoman of its Human Services Commission and served on the Minnesota Commission on Crime Prevention and Control.

During the campaign, she was a dedicated door-knocker hitting the streets as early as last April. She listened as constituents shared their concerns, one reason she believes they elected her. As a seventh- and eighth-grade geography and American history teacher she knows how to plan ahead and deal with pressure, and that, she thinks, added to her appeal as a candidate.

"They saw me at their door, I'm a nice teacher, and I talked about health care and taxes and fees ... and my goal is to do something about them," she said.

Funding special education, the school funding formula, and accountability through school testing are her top issues.

"Fair state funding for early childhood

DISTRICT 63B

2002 population: 36,821
Largest city: Bloomington
County: Hennepin
Top concern: Education

education, school readiness programs and K-12 public education is the cost-effective and right thing to do," she said.

Other major concerns facing her district include those related to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, including the new runway, and representation on the Metropolitan Airports Commission. With large Latino and Somali populations settling in her area, immigrant assimilation in schools and the local community is another.

Her passion and background will serve her well on the House E-12 Education Committee and the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. Her other committee assignments include the House Energy Finance and Policy and the House Transportation Finance divisions.

Building for all

Winkler wants to give everyone the chance to succeed

By **SONJA HEGMAN**

[Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley) might have a law degree, but he is probably also skilled enough to renovate just about any house on his own.



Rep. Ryan Winkler

The freshman representative has never hired a general contractor for renovations because he loves doing the work himself. That, and he learned carpentry from his father, who is a

contractor by trade.

Winkler's favorite house architecture is 1950s ranch-style. He and his wife, Jenny, have worked together on house projects, but won't get into the cycle of buying, renovating and selling. They are slowing down a bit with a newborn in the family. Isaac joined 2-year-

old Edward five days before Election Day.

With a bachelor's degree in history from Harvard, Winkler is a history buff and likes a movie "if it's good, not boring," also preferring movies with more of a historical spin. He also travels to Sweden at least once a year to visit his wife's family.

Coming from a long line of Norwegian farmers who homesteaded in Bemidji in 1908, Winkler said he "grew up with a strong sense of community" and felt that would be a benefit as a representative. He said his background in public policy issues gave him another reason to seek the seat vacated by two-term Rep. Ron Latz, who successfully ran for the Senate. Winkler managed Latz's 2004 House campaign.

A lawyer for the last six years, Winkler worked with the Metropolitan Council on transportation issues and has also represented watershed districts, inner-city projects

DISTRICT 44B

2002 population: 36,939
Largest city: St. Louis Park
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Education, transportation and health care

in Minneapolis and works as a software company's lawyer. He plans to sponsor bills related to education and technology.

Education, transportation and health care are the areas Winkler wants to work on for his district. He said they all are equally important. With a lot of redevelopment in his district, Winkler sees the light rail system as an integral part of the "quality of life in Minnesota." The state's economic growth is also vital, he said, and education, transportation and health care are all a part of that.

"We need to make sure all Minnesotans have the opportunity to succeed," he said.

Monday, February 5

HF569-Mullery (DFL)

Taxes

Hennepin and Ramsey counties authorized to impose the existing mortgage registry taxes permanently.

HF570-Murphy, E. (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Long-term hospital payment rates adjusted.

HF571-Hilstrom (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Best value defined relating to construction contracts, and acquisition and competitive bidding provisions modified.

HF572-Hosch (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Inmate mental health provisions modified.

HF573-Otremba (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Foster parent mental health training requirement imposed.

HF574-Loeffler (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Children's mental health grants and work group established; mental health provisions modified; trauma-focused, evidence-based practices grants provided; and county reimbursement provided.

HF575-Walker (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Mental health professional education loan forgiveness program established and culturally competent mental health service grants provided.

HF576-Thissen (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Mental health examiners authorized for residents in bordering states.

HF577-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Ditch buffer and drainage and inspection requirements modified.

HF578-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

MinnesotaCare Care for More Families program established, medical benefit accounts and high-deductible health plan coverage provided, and health insurance exchanges established.

HF579-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

MinnesotaCare covered health services modified and limited benefits for certain single adults and households without children repealed.

HF580-Dominguez (DFL)

E-12 Education

After-school enrichment program reinstated; grants provided to improve academic achievement, reduce crime, improve community involvement and increase character development.

HF581-Lenczewski (DFL)

Finance

I-494 corridor transitway feasibility study provided.

HF582-Solberg (DFL)

Finance

Workforce transition assistance pilot program funding provided.

HF583-Eken (DFL)

Finance

Indian Affairs Council funding provided to acquire burial site in Becker County.

HF584-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Metal theft penalties increased.

HF585-Bly (DFL)

E-12 Education

Early childhood developmental screening expanded and kindergarten entrance assessment established.

HF586-Bly (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Rice County nursing facilities designated as metro for determining reimbursement rates.

HF587-Bly (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Contested case hearing notice requirements modified relating to waters of the state.

HF588-Erickson (R)

E-12 Education

Special education teaching licensure program established for qualified paraprofessionals.

HF589-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance

Bioenergy producer payment program established for cellulosic biofuel production, and bioenergy production incentive program and working lands conservation program created.

HF590-Loeffler (DFL)

Taxes

Property tax statement required to contain additional information.

HF591-Thissen (DFL)

Health & Human Services

State managed care contracts with-hold and performance targets increased.

HF592-Loeffler (DFL)

Finance

Diseased shade trees removal and replacement funding provided.

HF593-Juhnke (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Public waters wetlands access restrictions modified.

HF594-Otremba (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Medical assistance non-emergency medical transportation competitive bidding modified, level of need criteria specified and reimbursement rate increased.

HF595-Laine (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Newborn home visiting program and family home visiting program established.

HF596-Slocum (DFL)

Finance

Office of Educational Accountability funding provided through the University of Minnesota.

HF597-Brown (DFL)

Finance

Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding authorized and full funding phased in.

HF598-Brown (DFL)

E-12 Education

School performance report cards required to indicate both the cut score and corresponding percent of items students must answer correctly at set performance levels.

HF599-Brod (R)

Health & Human Services

Grieving Parents Act established, and mothers required to be notified of burial and cremation options in the case of a miscarriage.

HF600-Eken (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Legislators and certain officers required to be elected by a majority of votes cast at the general election for the office, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF601-Walker (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Crisis nursery grant program established.

HF602-Dill (DFL)

Finance

International Wolf Center renovations funding provided.

HF603-Ward (DFL)

Finance

Brainerd; Mississippi River crossing corridor matching funds provided.

HF604-Laine (DFL)

Finance

Fridley; Springbrook Nature Center redevelopment funding provided.

HF605-Walker (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Minnesota Family Investment Program and child care provisions modified.

HF606-Peppin (R)

Finance

Rogers tornado relief; I-94 noise barrier funding provided.

HF607-Anzelc (DFL)

Finance

Plasma torch gasification facility feasibility study funding provided.

HF608-DeLaForest (R)

Taxes

Income tax rates modified.

HF609-Loeffler (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Food stamp requirements modified.

HF610-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Workers' compensation rehabilitation services fees regulated.

HF611-Anzelc (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Workplace communications between labor organizations and employees protected, and certain employer conduct prohibited.

HF612-Pelowski (DFL)

Finance

Port development assistance funding provided.

HF613-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Finance

Adult basic education appropriations updated and money appropriated.

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>HF614-Tingelstad (R) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Bipartisan legislative redistricting commission provided and constitutional amendment proposed.</p> | <p>HF627-Kranz (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Teachers retirement associations members benefits provided.</p> | <p>HF639-Hortman (DFL) Finance Greenhouse motor vehicle emissions reduction initiative enacted and state-wide transportation plan modified to reflect environmental impacts.</p> | <p>HF651-Juhnke (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Family agricultural revitalization zones authorized and value-added processing agricultural products promoted.</p> |
| <p>HF615-Walker (DFL) E-12 Education Comprehensive family life and sexual-ity education programs provided.</p> | <p>HF628-Kranz (DFL) Commerce & Labor Consumer purchases by credit card regulated and identity verification required.</p> | <p>HF640-Howes (R) Finance Walker Area Community Center funding provided.</p> | <p>HF652-Juhnke (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Agricultural fertilizer research and education council and program established, on-farm storage exempted from safeguarding and permitting, and check-off provided.</p> |
| <p>HF616-Hilstrom (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Major political party nomination 10 percent requirement eliminated.</p> | <p>HF629-Severson (R) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service.</p> | <p>HF641-Severson (R) Finance Sauk Rapids bridge project funding provided.</p> | <p>HF653-Anzelc (DFL) Finance Public Utilities Holding Company Act adopted.</p> |
| <p>HF617-Dill (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Crane Lake certificates of indebtedness authorized.</p> | <p>HF630-Kahn (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Voting age lowered to age 16, and constitutional amendment proposed.</p> | <p>HF642-Severson (R) Finance Sauk Rapids bridge project funding provided.</p> | <p>HF654-Loeffler (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Diseased shade tree removal and replacement funding provided.</p> |
| <p>HF618-Winkler (DFL) Biosciences & Emerging Technology Bioscience business development programs funding provided.</p> | <p>HF631-Anzelc (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Natural Resources department sales authority modified, forest resource assessment products and services account established, decorative boughs provisions modified and sustainable resources provision expiration removed.</p> | <p>HF643-Hansen (DFL) Commerce & Labor Meatpacking industry workers bill of rights and ombudsman position established.</p> | <p>HF655-Huntley (DFL) Health & Human Services Medicinal use of marijuana authorized, civil and criminal penalties imposed and application and renewal fees established.</p> |
| <p>HF619-Koenen (DFL) Finance Transportation funding provided with transportation certificates of assignment.</p> | <p>HF632-McNamara (R) Environment & Natural Resources Vermillion Highlands Wildlife Management Area designated.</p> | <p>HF644-Huntley (DFL) Health & Human Services Health Care Access Fund Oversight Commission established.</p> | <p>HF656-Cornish (R) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Local authorities prohibited from enforcing traffic regulations with administrative penalties.</p> |
| <p>HF620-Jaros (DFL) Commerce & Labor Child protective devices required in shopping carts.</p> | <p>HF633-Sertich (DFL) Health & Human Services Health plan coverage for hearing aids regulated.</p> | <p>HF645-Otremba (DFL) Health & Human Services X-ray equipment operator provisions modified.</p> | <p>HF657-Simon (DFL) Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division Employment and Economic Development Department technical and housekeeping changes provided, and contamination cleanup grant provisions modified.</p> |
| <p>HF621-Johnson (DFL) Finance Mississippi River Parkway Commission funding provided.</p> | <p>HF634-Norton (DFL) Health & Human Services Congress memorialized by resolution to support and reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program.</p> | <p>HF646-Dittrich (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections School district election provisions modified, mail election approval requirement eliminated and school board primary elections authorized.</p> | <p>HF658-Garofalo (R) Public Safety & Civil Justice Careless driving resulting in death gross misdemeanor penalty provided.</p> |
| <p>HF622-Zellers (R) Taxes Retired pensioners income tax subtraction provided.</p> | <p>HF635-Masin (DFL) Commerce & Labor Minnesota Wireless Telephone Consumer Protection Act adopted.</p> | <p>HF647-Dittrich (DFL) Taxes Residential homestead market value credit modified.</p> | <p>HF659-Slawik (DFL) Finance Child care license fees reduced.</p> |
| <p>HF623-Solberg (DFL) E-12 Education Language immersion summer school required.</p> | <p>HF636-Dittrich (DFL) Health & Human Services Pediatric dentist participation in a state health care program definition modified.</p> | <p>HF648-Mahoney (DFL) Commerce & Labor Unemployment insurance policy, housekeeping and style modifications provided; administrative rules incorporated into statute; and fraud penalties modified.</p> | <p>HF660-Bly (DFL) Energy Finance & Policy Division Renewable energy objective and state economic benefit strategy required.</p> |
| <p>HF624-Norton (DFL) Finance Rochester; National Volleyball Center phase II expansion funding provided.</p> | <p>HF637-Dittrich (DFL) Finance Full-day kindergarten authorized, state aid provided and sliding scale fee imposed.</p> | <p>HF649-Morgan (DFL) Finance Special education excess cost program funding increased.</p> | <p>HF661-Tingelstad (R) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Speed limit on city streets in rural residential districts provided.</p> |
| <p>HF625-Nornes (R) Health & Human Services MinnesotaCare four-month uninsured requirement for children eliminated.</p> | <p>HF638-Tingelstad (R) Health & Human Services Adoption assistance program eligibility requirements modified.</p> | <p>HF650-Juhnke (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Dairy stabilization loan program established.</p> | |
| <p>HF626-Nornes (R) Finance Academic competitiveness highlighting individual excellence and valuing education scholarship program established.</p> | | | |

HF662-Ward (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Automatic external defibrillators required in police vehicles.

HF663-Urdahl (R)**Health & Human Services**

Nursing facility payment rates increased to the 60th percentile rate.

HF664-Bigham (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Identity theft statute of limitations provided.

HF665-Dittrich (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

School bus equipment standards modified, pupil transportation requirements clarified, “multifunctional school activity bus” defined and licensure exception created.

HF666-Welti (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Dairy animal revolving loan program established.

HF667-Simon (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Major highway projects annual report filing required.

HF668-Garofalo (R)**Finance**

School aid payment percentage increased from 90 percent to 95 percent.

HF669-Beard (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Unclaimed lottery prize money allocated to Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund.

HF670-Liebling (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

School districts authorized to include energy efficiency improvement projects in alternative facilities plan.

HF671-Slocum (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Rochester; naming the Minnesota Veterans Outpatient Clinic in honor of Marine Cpl. Charles “Chuck” Lindberg urged by resolution to the president and Congress.

HF672-Otremba (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Marriage terms and procedures changed and clarified and certain fees required.

HF673-Hornstein (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Airports Commission agreements legislative authorization required.

HF674-Hornstein (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

United States troops in Iraq escalation opposed by resolution to the president and Congress.

HF675-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic funding provided.

HF676-Ward (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Restricted drivers’ licenses appearance modified.

HF677-Brod (R)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

JOBZ treatment for biodiesel fuel plants time period extended.

HF678-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

Heart disease and stroke prevention funding provided.

HF679-Morgan (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

“Concrete pump” as special mobile equipment defined.

HF680-Hilstrom (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School finance equalizing factors indexed at 150 percent of the state average tax base per pupil.

HF681-Svigum (R)**Taxes**

Agricultural property excluded from tax base for school bonded debt levies and agricultural land valuation based on production value.

HF682-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Resident tuition at public postsecondary institutions provided.

HF683-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Affordable health care right for every resident established and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF684-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

County reimbursement for housing short-term offenders funding provided.

HF685-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Preschool program and home visiting program for children diagnosed with mental illness or development delays funding provided.

Thursday, February 8**HF686-Ward (DFL)****Commerce & Labor**

Motor vehicle dealers selling only recreational vehicles exempted from the Sunday closing law.

HF687-Ward (DFL)**Finance**

Defibrillator purchase grants provided to local law enforcement agencies.

HF688-Moe (DFL)**Finance**

Regional emergency medical services programs funding provided.

HF689-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 52 in Olmsted County specific service sign required.

HF690-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

DWI and criminal vehicular operation provisions modified and simplified.

HF691-Erickson (R)**Finance**

Highways, local roads and local bridges funding provided.

HF692-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Nicollet County Historical Society funding provided for improvements to the Treaty Site History Center in St. Peter.

HF693-Lesch (DFL)**Finance**

Driver’s license reinstatement fee and surcharge partial installation payments authorized.

HF694-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

Declining enrollment school district funding increased.

HF695-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Lead Poisoning Prevention Act modified relating to testing and blood lead levels reporting, sale of children’s items containing lead prohibited, medical assistance coverage provided and lead hazards in properties disclosure required.

HF696-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Lead abatement program modified.

HF697-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Chester Woods Trail funding provided.

HF698-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Mentoring program organizations authorized to request criminal background checks from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

HF699-Nornes (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Adult certification for juvenile violent offenses lowered to age 13.

HF700-Eastlund (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Safe cabs program established to provide matching grants to communities providing safe transportation for intoxicated persons and report required.

HF701-Brynaert (DFL)**Finance**

Mankato district transportation headquarters funding provided.

HF702-Erickson (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Volunteer firefighter relief association’s funds investment with the State Board of Investment required.

HF703-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

School districts that have participated in the cooperative secondary facilities program authorized to levy for certain unfunded severance and retirement costs.

HF704-Kohls (R)**Taxes**

Universal tuition income tax credit provided.

HF705-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

Mental retardation and related conditions waiver, family support grants and semi-independent living services funding provided.

HF706-Hosch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Medical assistance employed persons with disabilities program modified, and commissioner directed to seek federal approval.

HF707-Thao (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Dental access for persons with disabilities study required.

HF708-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Medicare Part D assistance program established, ombudsman for managed care funding provided, and limited medical assistance coverage provided for individuals eligible under Medicare Part D.

HF709-Ruth (R)**Finance**

Trunk highway project expedited construction authorized.

HF710-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Sustainable agriculture demonstration grants provided.

HF711-Moe (DFL)**Finance**

Midwest Bioenergy Research Center matching funds provided.

HF712-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Safe Patient Handling Act adopted, programs and committees established, grant funding provided and funds transferred to the assigned risk safety account.

HF713-Erhardt (R)**Finance**

Special motor vehicle license plates authorized for all disabled veterans.

HF714-Erhardt (R)**Finance**

Special motorcycle license plates authorized for combat wounded veterans.

HF715-Haws (DFL)**Taxes**

Truth in taxation property tax program evaluation study provided.

HF716-Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

June accelerated sales and excise tax payments reduced.

HF717-Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Single sales apportionment accelerated relating to corporate franchise tax.

HF718-Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Federal tax conformity provided for individual income, corporate franchise, estate taxes, and property tax refund.

HF719-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Lake County; temporary suspension of tax-forfeited lands proceeds provided to reimburse county for purchase of Clair A. Nelson Memorial Forest land.

HF720-Lanning (R)**Finance**

Workforce transition assistance pilot program funding provided.

HF721-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Long-term care provider rates increased, new nursing facility case mix indices use required, MinnesotaCare employer-subsidized coverage exemption provided and initiatives and study required.

HF722-Mariani (DFL)**Finance**

Resident tuition regulated.

HF723-Demmer (R)**E-12 Education**

Structurally balanced school district budget requirements clarified.

HF724-Madore (DFL)**Finance**

Family homeless prevention and assistance program funding provided.

HF725-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Assistive technology provided for people with disabilities, and statewide study and reports required.

HF726-Tschumper (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota community action grants funding provided.

HF727-Tschumper (DFL)**Finance**

Waivered services program for persons with developmental disabilities county repayment requirement eliminated for certain expenditures.

HF728-Moe (DFL)**Finance**

Bemidji State University adjacent land purchase funding provided.

HF729-Emmer (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Competitive bidding contracts prohibited with companies or entities that have certain criminal or civil judgments.

HF730-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

Special license plates provisions modified.

HF731-Haws (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Minnesota GI Bill program for veterans established.

HF732-Haws (DFL)**Taxes**

Military pay income tax deduction expanded and military pension and survivor benefit payments subtraction created.

HF733-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

Red River Valley flood protection farmstead ring levees construction funding provided.

HF734-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

Transit fund and accounts established and motor vehicle lease sales tax disposition modified.

HF735-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

State entry authorized onto real property for geotechnical investigation under eminent domain, bridge and culvert provisions modified, rail service improvements funds regulated, state rail bank property regulated and penalties imposed.

HF736-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Ambulance service personnel longevity award and incentive program renamed the Cooper/Sams volunteer ambulance program.

HF737-Thao (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Collaborative services for high-risk children established.

HF738-Greiling (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Civil commitment early intervention services expanded to include chemically dependent pregnant women.

HF739-Thissen (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Arbitration award decisions required to include explanation.

HF740-Mahoney (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Price gouging prohibited on essential consumer good and services including food, water, fuel, gasoline, medical supplies and other items; and enforcement authority provided.

HF741-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Indecent exposure by caregiver in the presence of a vulnerable adult criminal penalties imposed.

HF742-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Drug crime conveyance device forfeiture expanded.

HF743-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Women in nontraditional careers grants provided.

HF744-Mullery (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School conference and activity employment leave granted and parent authorized to consent to a significant individual to participate in school conferences.

HF745-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

Special retired firefighter emblem motor vehicle license plates authorized.

HF746-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Family stabilization services program established, work participation bonus provided and work for low-income families support funding provided.

HF747-Simon (DFL)**Taxes**

Citizenship income tax credit provided.

HF748-Hosch (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Naturopathic physician-prescribed medicines authorized to be administered in schools.

HF749-Hosch (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Legislature required to vote on each unpassed major finance and revenue bill at the end of each odd-numbered year session.

HF750-Hosch (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Conference committee provisions required to have been passed by either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

HF751-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

General Education Development (GED) test fee waiver authorized in cases of homelessness.

HF752-Hornstein (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Career and college counseling pilot program established for high school students, program evaluation and reporting provided and research consortium established.

HF753-Howes (R)**Finance**

Special Gold Star vehicle license plate created for family members of military personnel who have died in active service, and plate fees exempted for surviving spouses or parents.

HF754-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Plumbers licenses required statewide.

HF755-Scalze (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Fishing license and waterfowl stamp recipients required to check off agreement to remove aquatic plant material from boats and trailers.

HF756-Doty (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
National Historic Places property sale restriction repealed.

HF757-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Upsala regional community center funding provided.

HF758-Laine (DFL)
Finance
Emergency assistance and transitional housing funding provided.

HF759-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Children's Museum funding provided.

HF760-Fritz (DFL)
Finance
Remembering With Dignity project funding provided.

HF761-Ward (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to state firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF762-Mullery (DFL)
Finance
Library basic system support grants limitations modified.

HF763-Lieder (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Highway contracts regulation modified.

HF764-Loeffler (DFL)
Finance
Chemical dependency allocations modified.

HF765-Loeffler (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Motor vehicle insurance database development required.

HF766-Westrom (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Ethanol-gasoline blend provisions modified and state departments directed to expand consumer options.

HF767-Dominguez (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Offender re-entry pilot project funding provided and report required.

HF768-Kalin (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Absentee ballot voting eligibility expanded.

HF769-Hansen (DFL)
Finance
Native plant agronomic research funding provided and technical advisory committee established.

HF770-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Giants Ridge Recreation Area definition provided.

HF771-Mariani (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
A resolution memorializing the president and Congress to promote the United States' ability to compete in the global marketplace for talented and necessary workers.

HF772-Paymar (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Aircraft insurance minimum liability requirements increased, and aircraft insurance made not voidable retroactively after a claim.

HF773-Hosch (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Legislative per diem payments prohibited during special sessions called due to failure of the Legislature to pass major budget bills.

HF774-Dill (DFL)
Finance
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa renewable energy facility feasibility grant provided.

HF775-Hackbarth (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Right to keep, bear and use arms defined as a fundamental right; and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF776-Benson (DFL)
Finance
School lunch aid increased.

HF777-Lesch (DFL)
Finance
Housing opportunity tax abatement program established.

HF778-Haws (DFL)
Finance
Extraordinary special education revenue provided.

HF779-Bly (DFL)
Finance
Native American languages; Council on Indigenous Languages funding provided.

HF780-Tschumper (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Veteran-owned businesses designated as targeted group businesses for purposes of awarding certain state and metro agency procurement contracts.

HF781-Loeffler (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities to replace one larger facility authorized and payment rate for new facilities established.

HF782-Huntley (DFL)
Finance
Certain hospital payment reductions eliminated and money appropriated.

HF783-Eastlund (R)
Finance
Tuition increase limits on public post-secondary institutions established.

HF784-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Finance
Medical assistance asset limit and excess income standard for aged, blind or disabled persons increased.

HF785-Norton (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Parental contribution for services for persons with developmental disabilities modified.

HF786-Hilstrom (DFL)
Finance
Special education programs funding increased and intensive intervention funding source established.

HF787-Hosch (DFL)
Finance
Portable radios and related equipment by local government units participating in statewide public safety radio communication system purchase provided.

HF788-Bunn (DFL)
Ways & Means
Demographic trends with forecast of state revenue and expenditures analysis required.

HF789-Kalin (DFL)
Finance
Energy efficiency and conservation improvement plans by public utilities and setting energy savings goals required.

HF790-Moe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Minnesota Public Facilities Authority Act provisions modified, technical and housekeeping changes made and Pollution Control Agency project priority rule modified.

HF791-Kohls (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Certain remedies for neglect, abuse and other actions against incapacitated and vulnerable adults provided.

HF792-Ruud (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Essential community provider designation provided.

HF793-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Essential community provider designation to a mental health provider in Hennepin County extended.

HF794-Otremba (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Medical assistance coverage modified to include consultations with psychologists, and medical assistance reimbursement rate for critical access mental health services increased.

HF795-Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Administrative law judge's order made final, disqualifications set aside and definition of 'child neglect' clarified.

HF796-Murphy, E. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Family, friend, and neighbor grant program to promote children's early literacy, healthy development and school readiness, and to foster community partnerships to promote children's school readiness established.

HF797-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Certain provisions for senior citizen's tuition modified, certain reporting requirements amended and certain banking services authorized.

HF798-Davnie (DFL)
E-12 Education
Funding mechanism for rewarding excellent education results created and money appropriated.

HF799-Holberg (R)
Finance
Transportation, Metropolitan Council and public safety funding provided; bonds issued; fees, funds and accounts modified; motor vehicle sales and lease tax proceeds allocated, and money appropriated.

HF800-Demmer (R)
Taxes
School districts and counties mutually agreeing to extend the time allowed before the date of the proposed property tax levy certification authorized.

HF801-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Bioenergy producer payment program established; bioenergy production incentive program established; bioenergy working lands conservation program established; rulemaking and general obligation bonds authorized.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota nonprofits

| | |
|--|---------|
| Estimated number of nonprofit organizations in state in 2005 | 31,000 |
| Nonprofit employers in Minnesota in 2005 | 3,551 |
| Employment locations operated by these employers | 5,104 |
| Percent increase from 2004 | 6 |
| Percent of nonprofit employment locations in seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area | 52 |
| Percent in northwest Minnesota | 13 |
| People employed by a nonprofit organization in 2005 | 257,000 |
| Approximate percent of the state's workforce | 10 |
| Percent annual increase in nonprofit workforce during last decade | 3 |
| Overall growth in employment in state during same time, as percent | 1 |
| Approximate percent of nonprofit sector jobs in the health care industry | 66.7 |
| Percent employed in the social assistance industry | 10 |
| Wages paid, in billions, by nonprofit employers in 2005 | \$9.8 |
| Percent of all wages in state | 9 |
| Average weekly wage for nonprofit employees | \$735 |
| For government employees | \$765 |
| For for-profit employees | \$795 |
| Of the state 501(c)(3) and (4) organizations required to file returns with the IRS, billions in revenues in fiscal year 2006 | \$30.4 |
| Billions in expenditures | \$28.9 |
| Nonprofit organizations that received state funds in 2005 | 3,178 |
| Organizations that received 75 percent of the money | 229 |
| Billions in state payments to nonprofit organizations for all purposes, including grants and contracts, in 2005 | \$4.7 |
| Approximate percent of state funds paid to nonprofit organizations that came from the Department of Human Services | 66.7 |
| State agencies that spent less than \$10,000 in 2005 on services delivered by nonprofit organizations | 40 |
| State- or county-administered nonprofit organizations that received, cumulatively, approximately \$1 billion in state grants in 2005 | 1,900 |

Sources: 2006 Minnesota Nonprofit Economy Report, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits; [State Grants to Nonprofit Organizations](#), Office of the Legislative Auditor, January 2007.

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SESSION WEEKLY



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**WINDS OF CHANGE
LIGHTS IN THE SKY
HONORING DUTY**

HF802- HF1062

SESSION WEEKLY

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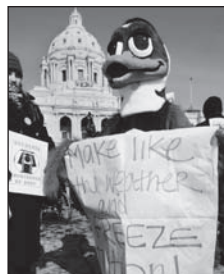
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On the cover: Lydia Johnson, 5, smiles as her mother, Carla Johnson, tells the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division Feb. 13, about their experiences when they attended the District 197 Early Childhood Family Education program.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



Winds of change

Bill aims for cleaner energy; some say it's too much, too soon

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Windmills along the Buffalo Ridge region in Southwestern Minnesota.

By NICK BUSSE

According to [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton), the climate has changed — at the Capitol, that is.

Peterson said he's been working to enact a renewable energy standard for Minnesota since he was first elected in 2002. For four years, he was out of luck. But with new leadership at the House and [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) publicly supporting an aggressive renewable energy package, he's confident this will be the year.

"I've seen it turn. This used to be the 'bad bill.' Nobody wanted to do it," Peterson said.

[HF4/SF4](#), which Peterson sponsors along with [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would gradually increase the percentage of the state's electricity that comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable energy sources to at least 25 percent by 2025. Xcel Energy, the state's largest power company, would face an even tougher standard of at least 30 percent by 2020.

Peterson characterized it as "the most aggressive renewable energy standard in the United States" relative to the size of states' electricity markets.

"We have the responsibility, I believe, to

my generation and those to follow, to take aggressive positions on technologies that are doable, that have been done, and can be done aggressively and prudently without disrupting the market," Peterson said.

If it becomes law, the standard would represent a significant leap over the state's current "renewable energy objective" of 10 percent by 2015.

The difference in terminology is key: whereas the "objective" requires that electric utility companies make a "good faith effort," the proposed "standard" is a mandate that would allow the state to financially penalize companies that fail to comply.

The bill also includes a flexible credit system, whereby companies that exceed the

standards can sell credits to companies that don't.

The Senate passed the bill 61-4 on Feb. 7. It is scheduled to be taken up on the House floor Feb. 19, and if it passes, will likely be headed to the governor's desk soon after.

Proponents of the measure say it will help reduce carbon emissions, to which many scientists attribute global warming. In addition, supporters of a renewable energy standard claim that it will add thousands of manufacturing jobs in the state, revitalize rural Minnesota and lower the cost of electricity.

Critics of the bill not only refute many of these claims, but also say that the bill

First Reading continued on page 4

places an undue burden on the state's power companies. They contend that wind power — which will constitute the bulk of the new energy — is fundamentally unreliable, and that consumers will end up paying the price.

Cost and feasibility

Pros and cons aside, some say a 25 percent by 2025 standard is simply demanding too much of the state's power companies.

One problem is transmission.

Terry Grove, co-executive director of CapX 2020 (short for "Capacity Expansion by 2020"), said that a 25 percent mandate would flood the state's energy market with an extra 5,700 megawatts of renewable electricity. Without new power lines, Grove said he isn't sure the state's electric transmission infrastructure can handle it. Moreover, he said modifying that infrastructure in such a short period of time would be a "tall order."

Similarly, Greg Oxley, government relations director for the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association, which carries approximately 14 percent of the state's electricity load, said that the proposed standard is "a bridge too far." Testifying before the House Energy Finance and Policy Division Feb. 5, Oxley estimates the state would need a new "six to seven very big transmission lines" going from west to east to accommodate the additional power.

Pressed by a question from [Rep. Kate Knuth](#) (DFL-New Brighton), Oxley admitted that his estimate is based on "sheer speculation"; however, he cautioned that speculation is all anybody has to offer on the issue.

"We haven't had time to do the kinds of studies that we need to do to make this happen," Oxley said.

Peterson acknowledges that the state's transmission system would need to be upgraded; however, he points to the key findings of the recently completed Minnesota Wind Integration Study, which states that Minnesota's electric utilities could reliably accommodate up to 25 percent wind power with minimal cost to consumers.

John Dunlop, senior outreach representative for the American Wind Energy Association, said that contrary to popular belief, higher renewable energy standards actually result in lower electricity prices by inviting new companies into the market and creating competition.

"If you establish a standard, it really invites competition, and that competition tends to keep the prices down," Dunlop said.

Creating jobs

Another selling point of the bill is the possibility of bringing new jobs to the state.

Testifying Feb. 5, Lynn Hinkle, a representative of United Auto Workers Local 879, said that a renewable energy standard would create a massive and immediate need for wind turbines. That would encourage the companies that make these turbines to set up shop in rural Minnesota, where most of the turbines would likely be located.

Hinkle said that Germany, which generates approximately 16,000 megawatts of wind power, currently has 40,000 workers directly involved in manufacturing and installing wind turbines. Minnesota, which would have to add approximately 5,700 megawatts of wind power, would likely add somewhere around 14,000 "core manufacturing jobs," he said.

Peterson admits that fostering economic development in rural Minnesota is one of his primary goals.

"I want my part of the state to stay connected to the state economy," he said.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee), however, isn't sure that's a good enough reason to burden the state's power companies with strict and potentially costly regulations.

"We have this mistaken impression that these are hugely lucrative companies, just because they're big, and therefore we can soak 'em," Beard said during a Feb. 12 division hearing.

Meeting goals

Critics of the bill have also pointed out that it might not actually live up to its stated goal of reducing carbon emissions. Betsy Engelking, manager of resource planning and bidding for Xcel Energy, said the legislation would keep her company's carbon emissions at roughly

their 2005 levels for the next 25 years — but not decrease them.

Also, Beard notes that because of the inherent unreliability of wind power — no one can predict how much wind there will be on a given day — power from wind turbines has to be backed up by coal plants, which will make reducing carbon emissions more difficult.

Opinions on the issue differ, however. Statistics compiled by Clean Energy Minnesota indicate that the renewable standard proposed by the bill would decrease the state's overall carbon emissions by more than 4 million tons annually.

Regardless, Peterson admits that more legislation will be needed in the future, both in Minnesota and around the world, to decrease carbon emissions, but said he considers the bill a good first step down that road.

"We can do our part," he said. 

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| House Public Information Services | |
| 175 State Office Building | 296-2146 |
| Chief Clerk of the House | |
| 211 Capitol | 296-2314 |
| House Index | |
| 211 Capitol | 296-6646 |
| Toll free | (800) 657-3550 |
| Senate Information | |
| 231 Capitol | 296-0504 |
| TTY, Senate | 296-0250 |
| Toll free | (888) 234-1112 |
| Secretary of the Senate | |
| 231 Capitol | 296-2344 |
| Voice mail/order bills | 296-2343 |
| Senate Index | |
| 110 Capitol | 296-5560 |

Committee deadlines set

A new session means a new set of committee deadlines.

According to [Joint Rules](#), "The Legislature shall establish by concurrent resolution deadlines for each regular session. The deadlines do not apply to the House committees on Capital Investment, Ways and Means, Taxes, or Rules and Legislative Administration, nor to the Senate committees on Capital Investment, Finance, Taxes, or Rules and Administration."

Approved by the House Feb. 15, deadlines for the 2007 legislative session are:

- **Friday, March 23** — First and second deadlines in the House.
- **Monday, April 2 at 2 p.m.** — Divisions of the House Finance Committee and the Senate must act favorably on omnibus appropriation bills.
- **Saturday, April 14** — First and second deadlines in the Senate.
- **Friday, April 27** — House speaker and Senate majority leader must establish joint revenue and expenditure limits for actions in conference committees.

According to [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the Senate is addressing

fiscal bills first, then policy issues, while the House is operating with the traditional model of policy bills first, then fiscal bills.

With the deadlines, March 23 will be the last day to pass policy bills in House divisions or committees, and, according to Sertich, "all fiscal bills will have to be out of their divisions to the finance committee on Monday, April 2 at 2 p.m. In the Senate, all fiscal bills have to be off the Senate floor on that day. The Senate did want to have another policy deadline; their policy deadline is Saturday, April 14. So they're working down the same roads, they're in different lanes, if you will, but we will come to a conclusion at the same time, get to conference committee and get our targets on the same day to end the session."

[Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) unsuccessfully offered an amendment to move the final deadline to April 16. [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have given conference committees two weeks after the final deadline to get their work done; thereby, leaving six days, not including Sundays or the final day, for House and Senate approval of those reports.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Feb. 8-15 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

AGRICULTURE

Next Generation fuels

Minnesota's ethanol industry supports more than 10,300 jobs, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty's [NexGen BioEnergy Initiative](#) could fuel the next generation of biofuels, resulting in even more job growth.

Gene Hugoson, commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, explained to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Feb. 13 one provision in the initiative that looks beyond corn-based ethanol to the use of cellulosic materials such as grass, straw and wood to provide other types of fuel. No action was taken.

The state needs to think beyond just ethanol to other biofuels, he said. "While we are seeing a high demand for ethanol and the price reflects that, we could turn that around very quickly and see a different scenario in the near future."

He said that once the 77 ethanol plants currently under construction nationwide are up and running, 6.1 billion gallons will be added into the pipeline, but demand is projected to stay flat.

The use of cellulosic materials could jumpstart a whole new biofuel industry creating more demand, he said.

Under Pawlenty's proposal, \$5 million in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 would provide incentives to "spur the development of facilities to produce fuels derived from biomass or cellulosic materials such as grasses, wood products and straw." Funding for the proposal would jump to \$9 million in fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Grants would be provided to ethanol facilities to help make the switch from natural gas to cellulosic materials as their fuel source. Hugoson said this would move the state in the direction of eventually being able to use this material in ethanol production.

[Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) advocated for a comprehensive bill to deal with the governor's initiative rather than what he sees is a "piecemeal" approach being taken by the House. "I sure don't want to see agriculture

get the icky end of the stick come toward the end of May."

[Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) disagreed with that approach. "Doesn't it make sense that it's appropriate that certain parts of the package be reviewed by the appropriate committees and then keep open the option of rolling it all together?"

More research for organics

While organic growers and producers have been changing their methods of farming to answer the increasing demand for their products, they have had to rely mostly on one another for best-practice information.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent) would help make the [University of Minnesota](#) a "national and international leader in organic agricultural research."

"Minnesota farmers understand the opportunities that organic production represents," he told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 14. A bill he sponsors, [HF844](#), calls for a "significant commitment for education and research in the field of organics."

Approved and referred to the House Finance Committee, the bill would appropriate \$2.2 million in the next biennium to the university to establish and maintain a statewide organic research and education initiative. It has no Senate companion.

Funds would provide for three full-time faculty positions to lead organic agronomic, horticultural, livestock and food systems research; education; and outreach. Approximately \$300,000 in each fiscal year would be allocated for new technical support staff at the university's St. Paul campus; UMore Park near Rosemount; and the research and outreach centers in Lamberton, Waseca, Morris and Crookston. About \$250,000 in each fiscal year would be available for graduate assistantships to support organic research, and \$200,000 in the biennium would be available for new equipment.

Atina Diffley, along with her husband, has operated Gardens of Eagan Organic Vegetable Farm since 1973. They are one of the earliest certified organic producers in the state.

"When we started there were no universities with organic education or research programs. We had little support developing healthy, high yielding organic systems for our farm," she said. Soil issues regarding organics are complicated, and education and research

Correction

In last week's Session Weekly we incorrectly stated that Rep. Sandra Masin (DFL-Eagan) was a Republican member. We apologize for the error.

are crucial as more farmers look to the alternative.

Interpretive center funding

Teaching students the basics of farming as a part of Minnesota's heritage is the basis of a bill held over Feb. 12 by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder), [HF388](#) would appropriate \$250,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to the Minnesota Agricultural Interpretive Center, or FarmAmerica as it is also known.

Cornish said that the Waseca center is currently functioning on a "bare bones" budget and wants an increase from its \$128,000 annual appropriation. This amount is also in the governor's proposed budget. One of three interpretive centers in the state, Cornish said it has not received the funds the other two centers have. It does receive \$136,000 in grants and donations per year.

The center has two full-time employees and a quarter-time executive director, but 450 volunteers help service the 16,000 to 18,000 annual visitors. With the \$500,000 biennial base funding from the state, the center would be able to hire a full-time executive director and a program director, said Bill Hoversten, a FarmAmerica board member.

Barb Maher, director of volunteers, said many children today have no idea what farming is. She said many students don't know that milk comes from cows or eggs come from chickens.

A companion bill, [SF531](#), sponsored by [Sen. Julie Rosen](#) (R-Fairmont), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

BIOSCIENCE

Investing in biobusiness

A bill approved by a House committee would provide \$2.2 million to the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota to help "promote and position the state as a global leader in bioscience business activities."

[HF618](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#)

(DFL-Golden Valley), was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee and now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Dale Wahlstrom, board chair of the alliance, said the money would be used to support new local bioscience companies, encourage out-of-state bioscience companies to relocate in Minnesota, and develop overall strategic plans for bioscience business development in the state.

Winkler said a large portion of the money would go toward funding a “systems dynamics modeling project” that would help the state strategically target its future investments and/or policy initiatives in bioscience.

“It will help, I think, drive better decision making ... because it actually gives some pretty solid data and information ahead of time to understand what the impact of those decisions will be,” Winkler said.

A companion bill, [SF737](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Soliciting federal dollars

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) thinks Minnesota’s bioscience and technology businesses aren’t doing enough to take advantage of federal funds; a bill he sponsors aims to help them do just that.

[HF452](#) would appropriate \$750,000 to the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#) to establish a “technology and commercialization unit” that would coordinate “public and private efforts to procure federal funding for collaborative research and development projects,” with an emphasis on small- and medium-sized businesses.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bill Feb. 14. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

According to Mahoney, similar programs already exist in 33 states.

“Minnesota is in a catch-up mode on a lot of our [research and development] and our high-tech industry,” Mahoney said. “We need to do a better job with our entrepreneurial companies that do focus on research and development.”

As an example of the money that could be tapped, he said that in this year’s budget alone, the Department of Homeland Security will dole out nearly \$39 million in contracts and grants for food protection and defense.

[Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) suggested that instead of having states create whole agencies to solicit federal money, the federal government ought to make the contracting and grant process more transparent.

“I am not going to run up against the wall trying to fix federal issues,” Mahoney replied.

Worthington training center

The city of Worthington would get \$2 million in state funds for an agricultural-based bioscience training facility, if a bill approved by a House committee becomes law.

[HF535](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rod Hamilton](#) (R-Mountain Lake), would help finance the completion of an “incubator” for bioscience companies — a facility that not only provides lab space but also trains new local workers.

“We want to express the importance of developing a high-quality workforce, to not only grow the local companies but to attract new companies out there in rural Minnesota,” Hamilton said.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bill Feb. 13. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF433](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), has been held over for possible inclusion in the Senate Economic Development Budget Division’s omnibus bill.

Glenn Thuringer, manager of the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation, said that if approved by the Legislature, the bulk of the funds would go specifically toward job training, especially for jobs involving the development of new biofuels.

“What we’re seeking is the state to support developing a training and testing center to feature incubator space, labs, classrooms and offices,” Thuringer said, adding that “having all these entities in one location” would help nurture new companies.

Wayne Freese, CEO of the Worthington-based Prairie Holdings Group, said the city of 12,000 people is rapidly becoming a hub for bioscience industries, with a new soy diesel plant, a new ethanol plant, numerous medical clinics and a bioscience business park either already constructed or in the works.

BONDING

Stillwater levee project

The city of Stillwater is asking the state for assistance to complete a flood prevention project.

Sponsored by [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood), [HF407](#) would appropriate \$200,000 for phase three of the project designed to protect the historic downtown from flooding, which has happened 17 times since 1937. This amount

is intended to get the city through the 2007 construction season only. The appropriation is in the governor’s budget proposal.

The \$200,000 would be one-half of the non-federal matching funds required for the construction. The city is asking only for matching funds for which federal funds have already been appropriated. The city would provide the other half of the match. The total cost of the final phase is estimated at \$5 million.

Stillwater Mayor Ken Harycki told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Feb. 13 that the flooding started when the Corps of Engineers built Lock and Dam No. 3 on the Mississippi River in 1937, causing the St. Croix River to flood the city. Some of the floods have been disastrous, the most recent causing floods on Main Street with sewers backing up and water seepage, he said.

In the final stage of the project, a 3-foot berm and flood wall would be built 125 feet inland from the riverbank. Sheet piling would be driven below the surface to reduce seepage and provide a base for the wall.

The bill was held over by the division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF367](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury), is awaiting action by the Senate Finance Committee.

CONSUMERS

Made in the USA

People holding Fourth of July gatherings might be surprised to see where their American flag paper plate was actually made, or a flag pin or patch on a jacket.

Millions of dollars worth of American flag merchandise is imported yearly, [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) told the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 13. He sponsors [HF122](#) which would prohibit the selling of “an American flag or a novelty or other item containing a representation of the American flag” unless the item was manufactured in the United States.

“If anything should be made in the United States, it should be the American flag,” said Rukavina. The bill was approved without opposition and now goes to the House floor.

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said he is opposed to any use of the flag other than at the top of a flagpole, but he did not offer an amendment.

[Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie) asked how those who sell such merchandise would be regulated. Rukavina said his intent with the bill is directed at stores and Internet sales, and said the cost of regulation would be minimal.

A companion bill, [SF62](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

CRIME

Early support for youth

The most important thing we can do to reduce juvenile crime is to support early intervention and prevention programs, said Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom.

He testified before the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 14 in support of [HF303](#), which would appropriate \$4 million in the next biennium to bolster youth intervention programs. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), said that with additional funds, 35 to 40 new programs could be established and existing activities expanded.

J. Scott Beatty, executive director of Youth Intervention Programs Association, said the best time to reach youth is when they are just starting to get into trouble. Restoring the funding would help make that possible. Since the budget was cut in 2003, 6,000 fewer youth have participated in the programs, Beatty said.

A companion bill, [SF277](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

EDUCATION

Short-term borrowing

Intermediate school districts could do short-term borrowing against future payments from the state and member school districts to avoid financial problems, if a bill becomes law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), [HF329](#) was laid over Feb. 13 by the House K-12 Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

"All of our revenue sources come from the districts that we serve for the students that we serve on their behalf. We don't receive direct levy aid from the taxpayers or from the Department of Education," said Connie Hayes, superintendent of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District in White Bear Lake.

Districts could borrow no more than 75 percent of the anticipated payments.

According to the bill, the education commissioner would certify the aid, fees and tuition payments in determining the maximum amount of borrowing capacity for the year.

"We have no ability to do any aid or revenue anticipation borrowing. The only way we can get

funding is to go back to member districts and ask them to advance funds, or we pre-bill in advance of tuition payments," said Kristine Carr, director of administrative services for District 916.

A companion bill, [SF422](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Alternative teacher pay system

An alternative teacher pay system, known as Q Comp, could be easier for three intermediate school districts to use.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved [HF365](#) Feb. 13, and referred it to the House K-12 Finance Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), the bill would modify the alternative teacher pay aid calculation for intermediate school districts.

The bill would change the aid calculation for intermediate school districts that do not have sufficient students to generate enough funds for Q Comp. Instead of using the current \$260 times the number of per pupil units, the state formula would be \$3,800 times the number of licensed educators teaching in the school. No fiscal note was provided.

"The goals with this bill are twofold: to increase the knowledge and skills of teachers that serve in the district, and to retain and attract teachers to the district," said Connie Hayes, superintendent of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District in White Bear Lake. The bill also addresses districts in Rosemount and Plymouth.

The problem is that these districts provide services for special populations, but the funding isn't enough to offer the alternative compensation. "We have some of the most severely disabled and challenged handicapped students from our member school districts," Hayes said.

Intermediate school districts generally take students with communication and interaction disorders from 11 to 13 neighboring school districts. Students spend two to six hours a day attending career and industrial tech courses.

A companion bill, [SF354](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

School readiness advisory board

Early childhood education could be an efficient, cost-effective and coordinated program focusing on education, healthcare and family support. A bill, [HF169](#), would establish a 12-member advisory school readiness board that would advise the governor and the Legislature on developing the program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), the bill was approved by the House E-12 Education Committee Feb. 13, and referred to the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division.

Legislative leaders would appoint eight of the members — five would be recognized experts in early care and education, and three would be community or business leaders. They would serve staggered three-year terms. The board would expire on Jan. 1, 2013.

The commissioners of employment and economic development, health, education and human services, or their designees, would be permanent members.

The bill originally had the governor appointing eight members.

"We felt having a governor appointing these members could politicize the picks; we want bipartisan support," Slawik said.

According to the bill, the duties of the board would be finding methods for measuring the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of early care and education programs throughout the state. Seeing ways to identify and measure school readiness indicators on a regular basis, and policy changes to improve children's ability to start school ready to learn.

Separate policy work groups would make recommendations on five additional topics, including financing early childhood programs

A companion bill, [SF92](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 19 by the Senate Education Committee.

Early childcare funding

Cuts to early education funding have created hardships for at least some centers that are trying to serve children and families living in hardship.

Mike Thorsteinson, executive director of Three Rivers Community Action Inc, which operates three centers in southeast Minnesota, said that approximately 70 families have lost service and Three Rivers has had to lay off 10 staff members due to \$228,000 in budget cuts to early education funding.

"This is just a picture of a one three-county agency in southern Minnesota," he said.

Two bills addressing the issue were brought before the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division on Feb. 13. Both were laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

Sponsored respectively by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield) and [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine), both teachers, [HF5](#) and [HF139](#) would increase funding for Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness and Head Start programs.

The bills would raise the total statewide school readiness aid to nearly \$10.4 million for fiscal year 2008, up from \$9.02 million in fiscal year 2007. Early Childhood Family Education program funding would increase from \$112 to \$120 times the greater of 150 or the number of people under age 5 residing in the district on Oct. 1 of the previous school year; and the state appropriation to Head Start would go up from \$19.1 million to \$20.1 million for fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Companion bills, [SF291](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), and [SF126](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), both await action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Safe school levies

School districts can access a safe school levy, formerly known as the crime levy, to help pay for student and staff safety-related issues, including police liaisons, gang resistance education training, school security and drug abuse prevention.

Under current law, a district can levy \$27 per pupil unit for the safety levy. The problem is that intermediate school districts can't access this levy, even though they are more likely to have incidents of violence, supporters say.

Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), [HF360](#) would allow the 32 metro school districts that are members of intermediate school districts to levy an additional \$10 per pupil unit for safe schools. If all levies would pass, it would provide nearly \$2.6 million in 2008.

The bill was heard on Feb. 13 by the K-12 Finance Division and laid over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill

Intermediate school districts provide services for special students with hearing, mental or physical impairments; learning disabilities; severe emotional behavioral or neurobiological disorders.

"The kinds of things we have seen this year are kids that bring weapons to school, and scissors are being used as weapons. Some are already sexual predators, one sixth-grade student brought in an 18-inch pellet gun to his home school and now he attends our school," said Sandra Lewandowski, superintendent of Intermediate District 287 in Plymouth.

A companion bill, [SF295](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Special education funding

Three bills that would change the special education funding formula have been held over for possible inclusion in the House

COLD DUCK



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Century College mascot Woody the Woodduck, aka Maureen Monson, a second-year law enforcement student, joined several hundred other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities students to rally in front of the Capitol Feb. 14 for lower tuition.

K-12 Finance Division omnibus bill. Each was heard by the division Feb. 8.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), [HF649](#) would remove the statewide cap on excess cost revenue and increase the reimbursement percentage from 75 percent to 90 percent. This bill would increase the excess cost aid by an estimated \$175 million in fiscal year 2008.

A companion bill, [SF702](#), sponsored by Sen. Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The current funding formula for special education requires that a district must first spend 4.36 percent of its general fund revenue on special education services before qualifying for an aid amount that equals 75 percent of the district's remaining cost, reduced by the

statewide cap on excess cost expenditures.

The Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district spent \$21.1 million on special education in the 2005-06 biennium, but because its revenue was just \$13.6 million, the district had to borrow \$7.5 million from its general fund, said Superintendent Ben Kanninen. The state's excess cost aid for the district for those two years was \$1.9 million. With this bill, that aid would increase to \$4.9 million.

"There is a 6 or 7 percent increase in spending on special education costs each of the past three years, and we're receiving a 2 percent increase in the general fund," Kanninen said, noting other programs have been cut to help cover special education costs.

[Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn

Center) and [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) also sponsor special education funding bills. Neither has a Senate companion.

Hilstrom's bill, [HF786](#) would reestablish program growth factors for special education at 5 percent per year and 10 percent for the excess cost special education formula.

Haws' bill, [HF778](#), would help school districts that have high special education costs by redefining the formula used in determining a district's extraordinary special education revenue.

ELECTIONS

Leaving campaign materials behind

Candidates with campaign workers would be permitted to enter and leave campaign materials in multi-unit residences, under a bill approved Feb. 14 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), [HF340](#) would clarify that candidates are permitted to enter into buildings such as apartments, dormitories, nursing homes or manufactured home parks. Additionally, the bill permits candidates who have filed for public office and campaign workers to leave campaign materials. The workers must be with the candidate.

Slawik said the change comes from a situation in which [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul) was unable to leave behind materials at a facility during the last campaign.

[Rep. Mike. Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said he, too, had a problem gaining access to an apartment building and had to go to the national headquarters to gain access. A maintenance worker was instructed to follow him through the complex and remove his campaign materials as he left them behind, he said.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said permitting any campaign worker into a multi-unit building could raise concerns. She failed to amend language changing "must be permitted to leave campaign materials for residents," to "may" leave materials.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF226](#), sponsored by Pappas, was recommended to pass by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee Subcommittee on Elections Feb. 14.

No anonymous pamphlets, sort of

An attempt to curb anonymous campaign pamphlets can only go so far, under a bill approved Feb. 14 by the House Governmental

Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Under [HF403](#), sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope), candidates would be required to have a disclaimer on campaign materials for four explicit purposes: to avoid the appearance of corruption in political campaigns; to promote justice and fair play in campaigns; to give voters information about the source of statements in campaign material so they may better judge its credibility; and to make it possible to hold accountable those who disseminate false campaign material.

Because the Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled in April 2006 that Minnesota's disclaimer laws were found to be overly broad and that regulating pure speech was thereby unconstitutional, new laws can't cover individuals or associations that act independently of any candidate, candidates' committees, political committees or political funds, said Peterson.

"This bill is the best efforts of our research staff to construct additional language in our state law," concerning disclaimers and the rulings of the court, Peterson said

"The money that is being spent in the campaigns is coming from these exact groups that are being excluded," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague). Brod unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have removed two of the purposes for the disclaimer requirement.

Although agreeing with Brod that the bill doesn't go far enough, Peterson said supreme court cases in other states have ruled limiting certain groups to be unconstitutional; therefore, the bill addresses disclaimers for individual candidates' materials only.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF458](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Transferring HAVA funds

The [Office of the Secretary of State](#) would be able to reallocate Help America Vote Act appropriations, under a bill passed 106-25 by the House Feb. 13.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [HF160](#) would allow unused appropriations designated for specific HAVA purposes to be transferred to other HAVA purposes. Previous allocation amounts are defined in statute for detailed purposes.

For example, \$120,000 that was designated to process complaints received by the office that went unused could be transferred for the purpose of maintaining the statewide voter registration system and to develop the capacity to handle registration and election transactions at the polling place.

The \$1.1 million allocated for maintaining the system has been used entirely and implementing the bill would allow funds to be allocated for needed areas, Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the office, previously told a House committee. The funds are to be used by the end of June this year, she said.

An amendment unsuccessfully offered by [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) would have distributed the remaining money evenly among townships to offset costs of HAVA requirements.

Hilty said the amendment was "a one-time solution to an ongoing problem." Additionally, townships have varying financial needs depending on size, he said.

An unsuccessful amendment offered by [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) would have allowed townships until 2019 to comply with HAVA requirements on the availability of disabled voter systems to be located at each polling place, which, he said, is an unfunded mandate.

The bill is scheduled to be heard Feb. 22 by the Senate Finance Committee. [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the Senate sponsor.

EMPLOYMENT

Working for the aging disabled

The House Health and Human Services Committee approved a bill Feb. 13 that would remove the age limit imposed by Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities, a program under medical assistance. It's been referred to the House Finance Committee.

The program, known as MA-EPD, allows disabled people to work while retaining their Medical Assistance benefits on a sliding fee scale. They are also exempt from marriage penalties. Under Medical Assistance, recipients are confined to \$3,000 in assets for single people and \$6,000 in assets for couples. Recipients, however, are limited to \$20,000 in assets and lose their eligibility at age 65.

"This simply allows people to work past 65, if that is their choice," said Joel Ulland, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

[HF706](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph), would also allow individuals 65 and older to abide by MA-EPD asset limits and continue to free them from marriage penalties. The bill has no Senate companion.

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ENERGY

Fixing light pollution

Chances are that if you live in a major metropolitan area and look up at the night sky, you can't see the stars too well. [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) wants to change that.

Kahn sponsors [HF446](#), which would gradually modify most publicly funded outdoor lights by outfitting them with a hood called a "cutoff luminaire" that causes light to focus in a particular direction, much like a flashlight. In the case of most streetlights and highway lights, the light would be directed downward.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division approved the bill Feb. 14, with the understanding that it would return to the committee later in the session. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

"This is a bill that sets up some standards for the control of light pollution — which it turns out is also an energy conservation issue," Kahn said.

Tine Thevenin, a member of the International Dark-Sky Association, said the hoods cut down on the energy needed to light a particular area while also reducing glare, which she said makes it harder to see.

"Two billion dollars a year is wasted on energy lighting up in the sky. We don't need it in the sky; we need it on the ground," Thevenin said.

Members of both parties expressed concern that the bill would create an unfunded mandate for cities and counties to replace their current outdoor lights.

Kahn said the bill is a work in progress, and that she is willing to work on the issue further. She added that the restrictions would not apply to airports, outdoor sports stadiums and certain other special situations.

Turning waste into power

A facility that turns garbage into energy and powers itself: sounds too good to be true?

Japan already has several such facilities, and a bill sponsored by [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township) would let Koochiching County build one of its own.

[HF607](#) would appropriate \$400,000 for a feasibility study for a plasma torch gasification facility to be owned and operated by the county. Plasma torch gasification breaks down solid waste on a molecular level, converting it to marketable energy and substances that can be used in a variety of ways.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division approved the bill Feb. 14. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF477](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

"With our project ... at the end of the day, nothing goes to the landfill," said John Howard, chief technical officer for Coronal, the company slated to build the facility.

Howard explained that even though the Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million for the project in its omnibus capital investment bill last year, a bureaucratic holdup within the U.S. Department of Agriculture resulted in a feasibility study being required before the project could receive federal funds.

He added that the total price tag for the combined federal, state and local project is \$30 million.

GAMBLING

Fraternal organizations proceeds

Fraternal organizations would be able to use gambling proceeds to pay taxes on leased facilities and certain utilities, under a bill laid over Feb. 13 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The issue came to [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), the sponsor of [HF271](#), from the Waite Park Moose Lodge. The organization serves and supports the community and needs some relief from financial burdens, said Gerald Janu, deputy area manager for the Minnesota State Moose Association.

Currently fraternal organizations, defined in the bill as a nonprofit organization which is a branch, lodge, or chapter of a national or state organization, cannot use gambling proceeds to pay for taxes and utilities like veterans groups can. The Moose have 27 lodges in the state and have lost three recently because they couldn't use gambling money to offset costs, Janu said.

A companion bill, [SF163](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

GAME & FISH

Baiting bears

Bear hunters would have a new tool at their disposal, if a bill sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) becomes law.

The Bear Baiter Buffet, a device invented and marketed by one of his constituents, is essentially a large metal box with six bait compartments, each with a time-released door. Hosch said the device allows hunters to bait bears without having to continually restock the bait.

[HF72](#) would allow the device to be used to trap bears in the state. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division laid the bill over Feb. 12 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF88](#), sponsored by [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), has been laid over by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Mike Lucken, inventor of the device, said the bill would clarify the state law on bear-baiting, which he said is ambiguous in regard to whether his invention could be legally used.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Tine Thevenin, a member of the International Dark-Sky Association, shows the difference in night light in Los Angeles in 1908 vs. 1988 during a Feb. 14 hearing of the House Energy Finance and Policy Division. The committee was hearing a bill that would restrict outdoor light pollution.

He added that the device is already used in several other states and Canada.

Ed Boggess, deputy director of the [Department of Natural Resources' Fish and Wildlife Division](#), said the DNR did not have an official position on the use of the device, but that the department had consulted with Lucken and had no immediate objections.

The bill's opponents include [Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings), who said the bill would "mechanize" bear hunting, and that people who could afford the \$800 device would hold an unfair advantage over other bear hunters.

Linda Hatfield, a private citizen, testified against the bill, arguing that the device's timed-release system would cause harm to bears by changing the times at which they eat, thereby altering their behavior.

Fishing discount for seniors

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls) would slash the price of fishing licenses in half for senior citizens—but doing so might slash the Department of Natural Resources' fisheries budget as well.

[HF152](#) would lower the price of a fishing license from \$17 to \$8.50 for people age 70 or over. Originally, the bill would have applied to those age 65 or over, but Nornes amended the bill after a fiscal analysis showed it would cause a drop of anywhere from \$584,000 to \$730,000 in the department's annual fishing license revenue.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill as amended Feb. 13. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF282](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Nornes said he is sponsoring the bill on behalf of senior citizens in his district who "still remember when the state had a free fishing license."

"As this session was getting started, again I was reminded, once more, that they wanted their free fishing license back. Well, I know we have to compromise in this place, so that's why I'm here suggesting a half-price fishing license," Nornes said.

Dave Thompson, a resort owner and former DNR Citizen Oversight Committee member, said that because of the state's aging population, decreasing license fees for senior citizens would have a "huge impact" on the department's budget. He added that the state had decreased its General Fund appropriation to the DNR in recent years.

[Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), division chairman, said increasing the bill's age requirement from 65 to 70 would likely "lessen

the impact" financially on the department.

Nornes added that decreasing license fees might encourage more seniors to buy licenses, and argued the state should consider increasing its General Fund appropriation to the DNR.

Timber harvesting

According to [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township), sometimes timber that should be harvested isn't—and that can have a serious impact on local economies in rural Minnesota.

Anzelc sponsors [HF354](#), a bill he hopes will draw some attention to the issue. It would require the [Department of Natural Resources](#) to prepare a "local economic impact statement" whenever forestland under the department's authority is withdrawn from timber harvesting.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill Feb. 12; it now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF91](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 21 by a subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

"What we find is that from time to time, timber sales on state land are delayed, and are many times pulled from the list," Anzelc said, adding that such cancelled timber sales often have a great impact on counties and schools, which depend on tax revenues from timber sales.

Wayne Brandt, executive vice-president of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association, said the economic impact statements required by the bill would provide a "reasonable set of information" for legislators and other officials to use when making decisions.

DNR Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier said the department had concerns about the "breadth of the land" covered by the bill and the potential cost of producing the reports, but added the DNR would be willing to work with Anzelc to improve the bill's language.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the bill focuses too much on economic impacts and not enough on environmental impacts.

"There is no consideration of conservation or ecological balance here, so the commissioner can only look at one thing," Wagenius said.

Anzelc responded that the bill was a "work in progress," and that he would be willing to consider environmental impacts as well.

Replacing road signs

Some road signs designed to provide safety for travelers are in need of repair or replacement.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernard Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF562](#) would appropriate \$2 million to the town road sign replacement program.

"This would provide some match for some federal monies that are coming down," Lieder said. "It's one of those situations where if you don't take advantage of the money, it's not going to be available here and it'll go somewhere else."

Approved Feb. 13 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

Reestablished by the 2005 Legislature, the program, in part, includes inventorying county and town road signs, evaluating their condition, potentially replacing signs and establishing an ongoing maintenance program. Because of better materials, newer signs have a longer life expectancy.

However, the program is not effective until there is an appropriation from state or federal funds.

Dave Fricke, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Townships, said that a federal bill provided \$3 million for the program. Typical federal practice requires the use of some local funds; therefore, approximately 80 percent of this amount would be federal dollars appropriated over four years. The remaining \$1.4 million of the request would be used to entice more federal dollars.

A similar program in 1989 and 1990 addressed about 150,000 signs across the state on rural and township roads. "We have almost 59,000 miles of road, and, we too, are real keen on having safety. ... A key to that are these hazard signs," Fricke said.

To do the whole state it would cost about \$25 million to \$30 million over a number of years, Fricke said.

"We need funding bad for this," said [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton), who sponsored a [similar bill](#) last biennium.

A companion bill, [SF360](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

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Listening to the need

According to parent advocates, the struggles of raising a hard-of-hearing or a deaf child aren't limited to simply fulfilling special health care needs.

"Parents are often in shock about their child's hearing loss, feeling overwhelmed by conflicting professional advice about choices and feeling isolated, especially in Greater Minnesota," said Lifetrack Resources Coordinator Candace Lindow-Davies, whose 11-year-old son is deaf.

[HF462](#), sponsored by [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), attempts to assuage this distress.

The bill, held over by the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division Feb. 14 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill, proposes \$200,000 for the 2008-2009 biennium for Lifetrack Resources to finance parent guides and other support services outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Lifetrack Resources serves approximately 1,300 people annually, either directly or over the Internet. The organization receives most of its funding through the Greater Twin Cities United Way, though it has been contracted by the [Department of Health](#) to provide parent-to-parent support across the state until 2008.

Funding is tenuous, said Lindow-Davies, and monies requested would pay for salaries for parent staff, as well as services such as educational workshops, Web site maintenance and informational materials.

A companion bill, [SF384](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Granting the disabled more money

According to advocates, the disabled endure struggles beyond their physical or mental ailments. To receive medical assistance, for example, recipients must "spend-down," or pay monthly medical costs until their income approaches poverty. They must also liquidate assets that exceed eligibility guidelines.

Sponsored by [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF784](#) attempts to change that. The bill, approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 13, would increase both the asset limit and the excess income standard, or spend-down, for aged, blind and disabled persons. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Currently, disabled people must earn less than 75 percent of federal poverty

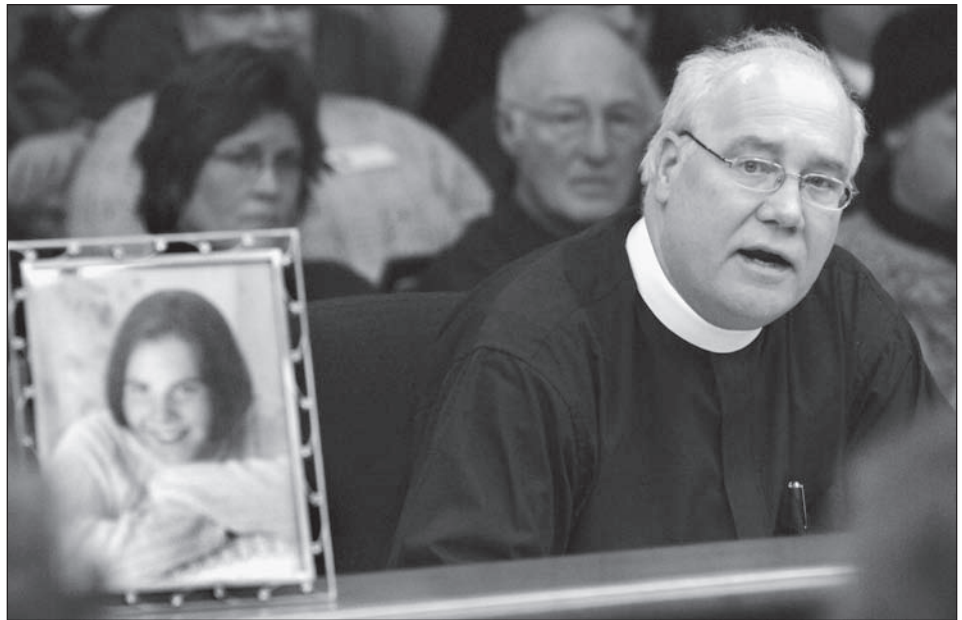


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The Rev. Craig Johnson displays a photograph of his daughter, Laura, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, during Feb. 13 testimony on disabilities before the House Health and Human Services Committee.

guidelines, or about \$7,500 a year, to receive medical assistance in Minnesota. Those earning more are required to cover medical expenses each month until their income meets assistance standards. The bill would increase the allowable income over four years — by 10 percentage points the first year and 5 percentage points each year following — to 100 percent of poverty guidelines.

In addition, the bill would double the asset limit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 for single-person households, and \$6,000 to \$12,000 for two-person households. Assets do not include homes or household goods, some business costs, motor vehicles or burial expenses. The boost, however, may allow some to cover unanticipated costs.

"The \$3,000 doesn't offer you a lot of flexibility for those unexpected expenses that we all have," said Joel Ulland, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"The amount of money these folks have left after they're through with their month's expenses gives a whole new idea to the word poverty," [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) said.

A companion bill, [SF695](#), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. Its sponsor is [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona).

Have a heart

[Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) spent part of her Valentine's Day promoting a bill designed for matters of the heart.

"I think on this day ... it's appropriate to

talk about the metaphoric place of feelings and the heart, and also talk about legislation that protects the heart," she said.

[HF678](#) would appropriate \$400,000 in one-time funding to the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Unit in the [Department of Health](#), which seeks to implement plans aimed at curbing Minnesota's No. 1 killer — cardiovascular disease.

Members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF509](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 20 by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.

The Centers for Disease Control originally funded the unit with dollars designated for planning. According to Dr. Russell Luepker, a member of the group's steering committee, the CDC has discouraged all proposals this year due to limited resources.

The bill would fund data collection and other activities, including developing infrastructure, detection and treatment capacity, promoting awareness and eliminating disparities. Luepker estimated the cost of implementation at \$1.2 million.

Preventing suicide

Al Kluesner and his wife, Mary, endured the unimaginable not once, but twice: two of their children, Michael and Amy, committed suicide.

Since the death of his daughter in 1985,

Kluesner has spearheaded organizations and legislation aimed at preventing his family's tragedy. On Valentine's Day, he urged the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, to approve [HF315](#), which would re-appropriate \$1.1 million a year for suicide prevention grants. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The decisions about this funding are life and death decisions, said Rachel Schott, whose brother killed himself while a sophomore at Mankato West High School. "As our funding was chiseled away, so has our suicide rate begun to climb in this state." No funding has been provided since 2005.

In Minnesota, 542 people committed suicide in 2006, the most in state history according to the [Department of Health](#). In 2003, the department reported that suicide was the second leading cause of death among 15- to 34-year-olds.

The bill, sponsored by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie), would provide funding at the rate allocated in 2001. The money would finance community-based efforts through a grant process; in 2004, 13 projects were funded.

"We have the strategy, we have the plan, we have the evidence-based programs to prevent suicide," Schott said. "We just need the funding."

A companion bill, [SF214](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

HOUSING

Meeting a desperate need

Amanda Danielson became homeless at the age of 15 because her home life wasn't safe, she said. To survive, she joined a group of 15 other homeless youth; they slept under bridges and in abandoned houses and dumpsters, which they sometimes ate out of, too.

On Feb. 13, Danielson, now a peer outreach worker for the young and homeless, testified before the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division on behalf of [HF537](#), which would appropriate \$8 million in the next biennium to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, focuses on three aspects of homeless services, known as the continuum of care: outreach, emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing. The funding would be distributed through a grant process for homeless

youth providers, and "shall be directed to meet the greatest need, with a significant share of the funding focused ... in Greater Minnesota." Up to 5 percent of funding would be designated for administration costs, and up to 8 percent for program monitoring and evaluation.

The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), estimated that \$8 million would meet about one-fourth the total need, or help about 10,000 young people, during the next biennium.

Clark sponsored the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in Minnesota last year, which mirrors federal legislation passed in the 1970s. It was to provide money towards continuum of care services for homeless youth and established a pilot project for after-school programs; however, the act was not funded.

HUMANITIES

Ethnic heritage

With 80 percent of the human brain developing before age 3, children should be introduced to languages as soon as possible, even before birth.

This is what Odell Bjerkness, retired director of the language villages at Concordia College in Moorhead, told the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division Feb. 12.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF318](#) would establish a 20-member Commission on Minnesota Ethnic Heritage, including four legislators and 16 citizen members.

Jaros said he couldn't speak English when he came to Minnesota from Bosnia. He said his mother told him how to say, "I don't speak English," in German, which didn't help too much and resulted in him almost getting beat up his first day of school.

The commission, which would meet twice between July 2007 and June 30, 2008, would work to foster understanding between ethnic groups and promote cultural diversity within Minnesota. The estimated cost for the commission is \$38,000 and would come from the state's General Fund.

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

Indian affairs

An Indian burial ground with about 16 bodies was found in Becker County near Detroit Lakes about two years ago.

The House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division heard a bill Feb. 12 on the significance of this land.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley), [HF583](#) would appropriate \$80,000 in fiscal year 2008 so the Indian Affairs Council could buy the burial site. The appropriation would be available until June 30, 2009.

Jim Jones, cultural director for the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, said the remains were found when a contractor was digging a trench for a house near Little Floyd Lake.

"This has turned into a unique opportunity to put back the remains where they came from," he said.

Many times when remains are found, they cannot be buried in the original location and are re-buried somewhere else, Jones said. Requests for relocation of the remains must be approved by the Indian Affairs Council. Under current law, Jones said efforts must be made by the state to buy burial sites.

This burial site is also unique because it is between 4,000 and 5,000 years old and pre-dates the Ojibwe people. Jones said nothing on the ground's surface indicated it was a burial site, like burial mounds found in other parts of the state. The goal is to return the remains where they were unearthed, he said.

The site is in the middle of a housing development on a hill. Jones said an archeological study was conducted before the development broke ground, but nothing was found at that time.

The bill was held over by the division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF622](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

MILITARY

Contract cancellations

An estimated 2,600 Minnesota soldiers recently found out that their Iraq stay is being extended by up to 125 days.

This will cause conflicts for some that had big plans upon their previously scheduled return. For example, some who were planning to get married had a down payment on a reception hall. Now they'll need to get out of a rental agreement.

"Most of the providers and people who operate these venues are being good Minnesotans and letting the families exit from those types of contracts," said Col. Eric Ahlness, government relations officer for the [Minnesota National Guard](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley), [HF532](#) would further help soldiers and their families to get out of other contracts.

The bill was approved Feb. 9 by the House

Labor and Consumer Protection Division, and referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

It now awaits action by the House Energy Finance and Policy Division.

“This bill would supplement the federal [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#), which provides relief from rent, mortgage interest rates, credit card interest rates and other costs that service members incur when they are called to active duty, and it gives them the ability to find a way to more conveniently pay some of those costs,” Winkler said. It would also apply to any business owned by the service member and his or her spouse.

Protection would be offered in areas that likely affect younger soldiers, such as being able to cancel a cell phone, satellite television, Internet service or health club membership contract without penalty. It also prohibits utilities from disconnecting service if a member of the household has been ordered into active duty.

“The essential purpose behind this legislation is that when soldiers and sailors are called by their country to risk their lives overseas or in distant parts of the globe, they are not also asked to pay for a cell phone contract they cannot use, pay for a wireless Internet that they can’t access or cable television that they can’t watch,” Winkler said.

A companion bill, [SF409](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Honoring veterans

When a member of the active-duty military dies, the government provides an Honor Guard for the funeral. But when a veteran from an earlier action dies, the Honor Guard is usually made up of volunteers from the local veterans service organization, with little or no reimbursement.

“We have an obligation to provide military funerals to all veterans,” Capt. John Marshall, commander of the Duluth Combined Honor Guard, told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9. His unit participated at more than 200 funerals last year. But for various reasons, the pool of Honor Guard volunteers is dwindling, as the number of funerals for veterans of earlier wars — especially World War II — is on the rise.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF451](#) would help ensure that all veterans receive military honors. The bill was approved and referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Duluth Combined Honor Guard members Robert Woods, left, and Capt. John Marshall, right, testify before the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9 in support of a bill that would provide Honor Guard member reimbursement for National Guard funerals.

Provisions call for: activation of National Guard members, at their normal pay rate, for the funeral of any Guard member who dies while serving actively in the military or after having served honorably for six or more years in the Guard; and paying up to \$50 to a Congressionally chartered local veterans service organization for each time it provides an Honor Guard detail for a veteran’s funeral.

Robert Woods, also a member of the Duluth unit, said that a 1999 federal law states that all veterans are entitled to military honors — two military personnel to fold and present the flag to the survivors. However, because of the nation’s military commitments, the forces are not available and the responsibility falls on the volunteers.

Woods said his hope is for the committee to approve the bill and forward it on so, “that we can help bury our fellow veterans with dignity.”

The issue hit an emotional chord with [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls). Tearfully she said, “I’m actually ashamed that we haven’t given you more. I personally don’t think that \$50 is enough.”

A companion bill, [SF487](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Tuition waiver for spouses

A spouse of a deceased service member could have all tuition and fees waived if they seek an undergraduate degree at any Minnesota post secondary public institution.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), [HF279](#) would extend benefits to spouses that are already available to children of any Minnesota service member who has died as a direct result of their military service. Known as the “War Orphans Act of 1943,” an annual \$750 stipend is also available to help pay for expenses related to pursuing the higher education degree.

Haws told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9 that the measure also changes the survivor’s state residency requirement. Beneficiaries would no longer need to be state residents; rather, the residency requirement would rely on whether the deceased was a resident of the state at the time of the enlistment or reenlistment into the military.

The bill was approved and referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

“The battle for the spouse remaining stateside begins when the spouse is deployed, but it continues when the news is delivered that they are not going to be coming home,” said Brian Jensen, a National Guard member and St. Louis Park police officer.

Steve Frantz, director of disabilities and student life for the Minnesota State College and Universities system, said that during fiscal year 2006, 20 to 25 students took advantage of the waiver at a cost to MnSCU of about \$80,000. He expects that financial commitment to increase another \$40,000 annually if spouses are included under the benefit. “We think this is a small amount of money to absorb,” he said. The stipend is funded through the State Soldier Assistance Program.

A companion bill, [SF375](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

TAXES

Local government exemption

Local governments could receive sales tax exemptions if a bill heard by the House Taxes Committee Feb. 13 becomes law.

The bill will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), [HF174](#) would exempt local units of government from sales and use tax. Only building materials and motor vehicles would be taxed. But there are exceptions to those as well. For example, building materials for local correctional facilities would be exempt.

Under current law, sales to school districts, local government hospitals and nursing homes, and public libraries are exempt from sales and use taxes. Other exemptions include purchases necessary for public safety, like fire trucks, police cars and ambulances.

If passed, the state would lose an estimated \$125.8 million from its General Fund in fiscal year 2008 and as much as \$150.5 million by fiscal year 2011.

A companion bill, [SF194](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

Tax reform commission

A tax reform commission could be created to look at the state's tax system.

Sponsored by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague), [HF251](#) would establish a 15-member commission to study the state tax revenue system and make recommendations to the Legislature for revenue neutral changes, including a draft bill implementing its recommendations by July 2009. Appointees would include private citizens and legislative members.

Heard Feb. 14 by the House Taxes Committee, the bill was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) didn't like the meaning of a "private" citizen when the private citizens would be of "recognized standing and distinction and who possess demonstrated capacity to discharge the duties ... who have special experience or knowledge in taxation, economics and accounting."

"I want to see real people on this committee," Rukavina said.

He added that a man with epilepsy called him the other day saying he had to choose between

eating and buying his prescriptions.

"Is he gonna be on this commission? He could teach people on the committee a lot," Rukavina said. "It's our duty to make money and spend it. And we haven't been doing a very good job of it lately."

Brod said she would be "more than happy" to work on the commission membership and would welcome suggestions from other representatives. But, she said her intent is to strike a balance between legislative and private commission members.

"We all learn a lot from all of our constituents," she said. "That obviously has to be in play as we look at our entire tax structure."

Exempt capital purchases

Three bills were introduced to the House Taxes Committee Feb. 13 that would provide sales tax exemptions on capital equipment purchases for businesses.

All were held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Reps. [Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton), [Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) and [Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) are sponsoring [HF186](#), [HF193](#) and [HF206](#), identical bills that would help the state's manufacturing industry by repealing the refund requirement for capital equipment, making the sales tax exemption available at the time of purchase or lease.

Currently, businesses purchasing qualifying capital equipment must pay the sales tax when they buy the equipment and then apply for a refund. A business may file no more than two claims per year, but the claims can be for multiple transactions and there is no dollar limit.

Joe Glenn, president of Glenn Metalcraft in Princeton, said he paid \$90,000 in sales tax on Feb. 5 for equipment he needed to help differentiate his company from others in the industry.

David Owen, president of DHY Corporation, a precision machining company in Lakeville, said global competition is making it difficult for manufacturing businesses in the United States.

"We are literally fighting for our lives," he said. "It feels a little like being a dying patient and having blood taken from you, and it just sits on a shelf somewhere. Then they come and give it back to you when you're even sicker. It seems pointless and it's discouraging."

A trio of companion bills, [SF159](#), [SF234](#) and [SF117](#), sponsored by Sens. [Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), [Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley) and [Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), await action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

TRANSPORTATION

Traffic ticket fee

It's about money. It's about behavior. It's about money. It's about behavior.

This was the back-and-forth discussion at the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 12 focusing on whether local governments should have the right to assess administrative fees onto traffic citations.

[HF656](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) would prohibit fees, while [HF847](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph), would allow local authorities to levy fees at their discretion.

Cornish said adding administrative fees onto traffic tickets is nothing more than an effort to get more money for local governments. Local police officers have been told that if they write a ticket, any additional fees assessed on top of a state violation will go to the local government's pocket, said Cornish. With so many smaller communities losing local government aid, some see this as a way to recoup some of their losses.

Not only would this practice go against recent findings by the Minnesota Attorney General's office, Cornish said, there would be no uniformity in the way local authorities write citations.

The bill was laid over for further consideration. Its companion bill, [SF155](#), sponsored by [Sen. Leo Foley](#) (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

However, Hosch's bill, which has no Senate companion, was approved and referred to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

Hosch said that when allowed to impose smaller fines for minor violations, as is the practice with some small municipalities, there is a marked decrease in traffic violations.

In support of Hosch's bill, Winona Chief of Police Frank Pomeroy said when the city began to assess administrative fees, drivers began to slow down, and the number of annual accidents fell from 1,200 to 800.

Restricted driver's license appearance

Joey Jordan didn't get to graduate from high school, get married or raise a family.

The 16-year-old was killed instantly when he was hit head-on by a drunken driver 19 months ago. Behind the wheel of the other vehicle was a 25-year-old with three prior convictions for driving under the influence.

"This is a hell I hope none of you ever have to go through," Kathy Jordan, Joey's mother, told the House Transportation and Transit

Policy Subcommittee Feb. 14.

A bill they strongly support would make it less likely.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd), [HF676](#) would change the appearance of a restricted driver's license that disallows consumption of alcohol to the same color as that of a driver under the age of 21, and that there be a symbol or letter on the front of the license indicating it is a so-called "B-Card."

"We want to make it more visible to prevent future tragedies," Ward said.

Approved by the subcommittee, the bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes to the House Transportation Finance Division.

Under current law, the [Department of Public Safety](#) can issue a license to certain drivers if the applicant signs a written agreement to certain restrictions, such as no alcohol use.

The problem with the current license is that the restriction is placed on the back of the license in small print.

Marc Jordan, Joey's dad, used to operate three bars. He wasn't aware of the restriction's location until he asked to see the license of a co-worker that had been arrested for a DWI. "Nobody looks at the back of the card," he said.

"This way the bartender can more easily spot the provision," Kathy added.

[Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) and [Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) both said the bill would help, but noted the onus is on servers to check everyone's identification.

"Restaurants should have to card everyone," Nelson said. "We need to add that."

Rail feasibility study

An updated mode of transportation may one day come close to duplicating a time when streetcars ran between Lake Minnetonka and Minneapolis.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), [HF246](#) would provide \$500,000 for the Metropolitan Council to work with the [Center for Transportation Studies](#) at the University of Minnesota and the university's [Center for Changing Landscapes](#) to study the use of light or corridor rail from downtown Minneapolis to Ridgedale Drive, with the possibility of extending the line to Wayzata.

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

Approved Feb. 13 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

"There is an existing (Burlington Northern

Santa Fe) rail line just two miles south of Interstate 394," Hortman said, indicating the study would be directed to that stretch of track.

Brady Priest lives in Plymouth and works as an attorney in downtown Minneapolis. His 12-mile commute generally takes 25-30 minutes, even though he pays to use the so-called "Sane Lane" on a regular basis. However, winter weather or a traffic incident can easily extend his commute to more than an hour.

"I believe a rail line connecting the western suburbs to the Twin Cities will be a great improvement to the quality of life for those who, like me, head downtown every day on what's become an ever more congested 394," he said.

Hortman said the study would also look at integrating the corridor with other planned projects, such as the Southwest Rail Transit Corridor.

A companion bill, [SF189](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), was scheduled to be heard Feb. 15 by the Transit Subdivision of the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

Slow it down

The speed limit on roads within urban districts or on a town road in a rural residential district is 30 mph, but the limit can jump to 55 mph in other areas. For some, that's way too fast.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#)

(R-Andover), [HF661](#) would add "or city street" to the 30 mph zone.

It was held over Feb. 12 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee for further discussion.

Andover Mayor Michael Nash spoke about an incident where a car going the speed limit in a residential area tried to make a turn, lost control, hit a house and exposed a gas line. There was an explosion and the house was destroyed. Nash said many Andover residents, called him asking, "Why is the limit 55? Can't you change it?"

Andover City Engineer David Berkowitz, who said he spends a lot of time answering residents' questions about the speed limit, said there are areas within the community that are not designed for high motor vehicle speeds. The city has put up warning signs throughout but people are not slowing down.

The city petitioned the [Department of Transportation](#) to lower the speed limit to 30 mph, but the department determined the limit should stay at 55 mph, Berkowitz said.

Bernard Arseneau, state traffic engineer with the department, said the department wants to maintain manageable statutory speeds throughout the state, while keeping the flexibility to work with areas like Andover. Further research is being done and the department will propose a solution to Andover within a year, he said.

A companion bill, [SF747](#), sponsored by [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), has been sent to the Senate Transportation Committee.

SUPERMILEAGE DEMO



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Eden Prairie High School seniors Eddy Stilson, *bottom*, and Jared Hylander look at one of the components of the school's supermileage vehicle that was on display Feb. 13 in the Rotunda as part of Career and Technical Education Week. Students participating in the Minnesota Technology Education Association design and build one-person vehicles to achieve maximum mileage efficiency. Last year's Eden Prairie vehicle achieved 230 mpg. This year's competition will be May 15-16 in Brainerd.

No stranger to the Capitol

Berns looks to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor

By Nick Busse

In an article in the [May 12, 2006](#), issue of Session Weekly, retiring Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior) left a piece of advice for her successor: “Have an open door. Be willing to listen to all sides.”



Rep. John Berns

Her successor turned out to be [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata), who read that advice and took it to heart.

“In Barb’s tradition, because she was a great legislator, I will always listen and be there for my constituents,” Berns said.

No stranger to the Capitol, Berns works as Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s No. 2 lawyer. He is also a volunteer firefighter, a former prosecutor, former city council member, former conservation district board member,

and — last but not least — a proud dad. He and his wife have three children, the youngest of which was born right before last year’s election.

But Berns, who grew up in a small Iowa farm town “in the middle of nowhere,” is especially excited about his newest challenge.

“I’m very honored to be here. Probably like most people who are elected, you never imagine growing up as a kid that you’ll have the opportunity to serve in the Minnesota House of Representatives,” he said.

As a legislator, Berns’ priorities include several common themes like education, property taxes and health care, as well as one that’s not so common.

“If you look at the map, my district’s got a big blue spot in the middle of it, which is Lake Minnetonka,” Berns said, adding that 10 of the 11 cities in his district touch the lake. He said he’d like to see the state focus more

DISTRICT 33B

2002 population: 39,943

Largest city: Minnetonka

County: Hennepin

Top concerns: Education, property taxes, health care and invasive aquatic species

on controlling the spread of invasive aquatic species.

“I really want to make sure the state does everything it can to prevent zebra mussels from invading,” Berns said. “At the same time, the state needs to do more research to eradicate milfoil. Those are really big issues in my district.”

As for being a Republican in a DFL-controlled Legislature, Berns said he’s optimistic.

“We have so much in common, both as people and as public servants who want to get things done, and that really makes me feel good.”

Keeping himself accessible

Gardner’s blog helps him connect with constituents

By Lee Ann Schutzy

Besides being a new member of the House, [Rep. Paul Gardner](#) (DFL-Shoreview) claims new membership to the Minnesota chapter of the General Society of the War of 1812, a group of descendants from the historic war.



Rep. Paul Gardner

Gardner’s avid interest in genealogy, and his 15-year search of his family’s lineage, led to documentation that his great-great-grandfather played a significant role in the war.

But tracing his family roots is not the only area where he has a strong interest — just bring up the topic of recycling.

Gardner stepped down as executive director of the Recycling Association of Minnesota after his election. Between his family of four’s

composting and recycling efforts, they don’t generate enough garbage to fill a 30-gallon container weekly.

An avid recycler since his college days, he recognizes how the state can benefit economically from recycling efforts. “We actually need more recyclables. Countries, like China, are buying up scrap metal, aluminum and plastic. And this has driven up the price, making the business of recyclables attractive,” he said.

Gardner earned his House seat by the slimmest margin of any member. His 55-vote lead triggered an automatic recount, where four of those votes went to his opponent.

Throughout the campaign, he focused on five issues: education, affordable health care, transportation, environment and rising property taxes.

“Transportation is very important to my constituents. I-694 is a bottleneck between 35E and 35W. That hasn’t been on the

DISTRICT 53A

2002 population: 36,629

Largest city: Shoreview

Counties: Anoka and Ramsey

Top concerns: Transportation, education, health care, environment and property taxes

(construction) calendar because of funding issues. I think you will see a big suburban push for transportation funding,” he said.

To make government more transparent and accessible to his constituents, Gardner has established his own weekly blog at [www.paulgardner53a.blogspot.com](#). “It’s not commentary, but it’s a chance for people to see who is coming to the office. I really want constituents to speak up,” he said.

Gardner also serves on the House Energy Finance and Policy and Environment and Natural Resources Finance divisions; House Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and is vice chairman of the Minnesota Heritage Finance Division.

Monday, February 12

HF802-Doty (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

War Orphans Act surviving military spouses and children; educational benefits eligibility clarified and extended.

HF803-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education

SMART Board pilot program funding provided in school districts throughout the state.

HF804-Atkins (DFL)

E-12 Education

International Baccalaureate, Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement programs participation increased.

HF805-Ruud (DFL)

Finance

Inflationary adjustment limitation removed relating to school district referendum allowance limit.

HF806-Faust (DFL)

Finance

Career and technical revenue increased for school districts.

HF807-Ruud (DFL)

Finance

Equity revenue increased for school districts above the 95th percentile.

HF808-Tillberry (DFL)

E-12 Education

Licensed student services personnel aid provided.

HF809-Dominguez (DFL)

Finance

Basic education aid increased.

HF810-Swails (DFL)

E-12 Education

Gifted and talented licensure and continuing education requirements established for teachers and other staff and administrators.

HF811-Wardlow (R)

E-12 Education

Mathematics and science professional development programs provided.

HF812-Seifert (R)

E-12 Education

School day minimum length established.

HF813-Eastlund (R)

E-12 Education

School board special election petition requirements clarified.

HF814-Bly (DFL)

E-12 Education

Teacher education and compensation helps (TEACH) program established.

HF815-Demmer (R)

Finance

Voluntary all-day kindergarten funding provided.

HF816-McNamara (R)

Finance

Prairie and wetland restoration planning and resource inventory funding provided relating to University of Minnesota land in Dakota County.

HF817-Benson (DFL)

Finance

Declining enrollment funding increased.

HF818-Hortman (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Towing authority granted to Department of Transportation within metropolitan district, and hazardous materials and motor vehicle carrier provisions modified.

HF819-Doty (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

State lottery games required for the benefit of the arts, historic preservation and conservation; and arts fund and historic preservation fund created.

HF820-Rukavina (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

University of Minnesota; Regent Candidate Advisory Council and regent nomination and election provisions repealed.

HF821-Smith (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Property offense monetary thresholds adjusted.

HF822-Clark (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

Neighborhood revitalization program expiration date extended.

HF823-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Willmar airport runway extension funding provided.

HF824-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Willmar airport relocation repayment waived, future fund reductions prohibited and runway extension and improvements required.

HF825-Morrow (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Recreational vehicle combinations length limit for middle vehicle removed.

HF826-Mariani (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

Motor vehicle manufacturing plant and facilities required to be maintained for a period of time after closure.

HF827-Knuth (DFL)

Finance

Greenhouse motor vehicle emissions reduction initiative enacted, and statewide transportation plan modified to reflect environmental impacts.

HF828-Kahn (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

A resolution urging the president and Congress to end trade, financial and travel restrictions to Cuba.

HF829-Paymar (DFL)

Finance

Public safety, corrections, courts, public defenders and other criminal justice funding provided and fees modified.

HF830-Nornes (R)

Taxes

Job opportunity building zone tax benefits extended.

HF831-Sailer (DFL)

Finance

Independent School District No. 2311, Clearbrook-Gonvick, authorized to use health and safety revenue to demolish a building.

HF832-Buesgens (R)

E-12 Education

General education access grants for students authorized.

HF833-Brown (DFL)

Finance

Special education additional aid provided, and program growth factors increased in regular and excess cost special education revenue.

HF834-Scalze (DFL)

Finance

Metropolitan Regional Parks System funding provided.

HF835-Demmer (R)

E-12 Education

Alternative school calendar pilot program established to examine the impact of school calendar arrangements on student learning.

HF836-Kalin (DFL)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid program state aid increased.

HF837-Lanning (R)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid increased and equalizing factors indexed.

HF838-Erickson (R)

Finance

Independent School District No. 480, Onamia, levy authorized.

HF839-Welti (DFL)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid program state aid increased.

HF840-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

Early childhood and family, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and adult education funding provided.

HF841-Benson (DFL)

Finance

Program growth factors re-established, and special education programs funding increased.

HF842-Huntley (DFL)

Finance

Child care, children and family, licensing, health care, continuing care, mental health, health insurance and Department of Health provisions modified.

HF843-Benson (DFL)

Taxes

Electronic filing of individual income tax returns provided.

HF844-Tschumper (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

University of Minnesota organic research and education initiative funding provided.

HF845-Bly (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Alternative livestock research and outreach funding provided to the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Minnesota.

HF846-Doty (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Organic certification cost-share assistance and sustainable agriculture demonstration grants funding provided.

HF847-Hosch (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Counties and cities authorized to impose administrative penalties for certain traffic violations.

HF848-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Agricultural homestead distance limitation eliminated, agricultural market value homestead credit increased and agricultural homestead class rate reduced.

HF849-Moe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Shoreland resorts development regulation provided.

HF850-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Youthbuild program funding provided.

HF851-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Jobs and economic development funding provided, mortgage licensing requirements modified, construction codes and licensing recodified and modified, State Building Code modified and penalties provided.

HF852-Johnson (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

State fairgrounds area liquor license authorized.

HF853-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Timber sales provided on tax-forfeited lands.

HF854-Sailer (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Video display device collection, transportation and recycling provided; and civil penalties imposed.

HF855-Atkins (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 52 east and west frontage roads in Dakota County construction provided and bonds issued.

HF856-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Homestead property taxes limited to a percentage of homeowner's income.

HF857-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Minnesota Financial Crimes Oversight Council annual report to the Legislature required.

HF858-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Big Bog State Recreation Area funding provided.

HF859-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul RiverCentre loan repayment forgiven; city of St. Paul funding provided to defease, pay, redeem or refund city bonds.

HF860-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul RiverCentre loan repayment forgiven; city of St. Paul funding provided to defease, pay, redeem or refund city bonds.

HF861-Gunther (R)**Finance**

St. James road improvements funding provided.

HF862-Liebling (DFL)**Taxes**

Taxpayer assistance toll-free telephone lines required.

HF863-Hortman (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

California vehicle emissions standards adopted and updates provided to comply with the federal Clean Air Act.

HF864-McNamara (R)**Finance**

Hastings Veterans Home supportive housing funding provided.

HF865-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Greenleaf Lake State Park land acquisition funding provided.

HF866-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Howard Lake ditch work grant provided.

HF867-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Burglary in the second degree crime definition modified.

HF868-Buesgens (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Trust funds for post-employment benefits authorized for political subdivisions.

HF869-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Urban and tribal Indian housing programs funding provided.

HF870-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

Medford wastewater treatment facility funding provided.

HF871-Rukavina (DFL)**Taxes**

National Service Trust educational awards income tax subtraction authorized.

HF872-Anzelc (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Ainsworth Lumber Company; extra unemployment benefits provided for certain workers.

HF873-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Centers for Independent Living funding provided.

HF874-Anzelc (DFL)**Finance**

Northome municipal building funding provided.

HF875-Slocum (DFL)**Finance**

Fort Snelling Upper Bluff emergency building stabilization funding provided.

HF876-Swails (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association general plan service credit purchase authorized for a St. Paul employee.

HF877-Norton (DFL)**Finance**

Speech-language pathologists loan forgiveness program and account established.

HF878-Doty (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Board of Animal Health consultants expanded to include the commissioner of agriculture.

HF879-Nelson (DFL)**Taxes**

Contractor payment withholdings required.

HF880-Atkins (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 55 and Yankee Doodle Road interchange funding provided.

HF881-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Land Planning Act and related statutes modified, and erroneous and obsolete references corrected.

HF882-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan livable communities fund governing provisions modified, funds transfer authorized and one-time transfer for local planning assistance grants and loans provided.

HF883-Marquart (DFL)**Finance**

Red River basin digital elevation model funding provided.

HF884-Otremba (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council funding provided.

HF885-Hilty (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Cloquet local sales tax authorized.

HF886-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

Capital improvements funding provided.

HF887-Kohls (R)**Finance**

Highway and bridge construction funding provided.

HF888-Kohls (R)**Finance**

Highway and bridge construction projects funding provided.

HF889-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association administrative provisions modified.

HF890-Magnus (R)**Finance**

Regional transportation planning funding provided.

HF891-Nelson (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin Technical College Brooklyn Park campus asset preservation funding provided.

HF892-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Teacher professional development funding provided.

HF893-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Aquatic plant harvest and destruction permit provisions modified.

HF894-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Head Start funding increased.

HF895-Eken (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

County withdrawal from regional jail system authorized.

HF896-Doty (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

All-terrain vehicle account purposes modified, and gasoline usage attributable to all-terrain vehicle operation amount modified.

HF897-Simpson (R)**Taxes**

Federal income tax conformity provided relating to 2006 and 2007 provisions authorizing expensing of certain depreciable assets.

HF898-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

State and local jail and prison inmates required to be housed in publicly owned and operated facilities, and private prison contracting and Prairie Correctional Facility contract renewal prohibited.

HF899-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Fairmont sports complex funding provided.

HF900-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Ceylon softball field lighting funding provided.

HF901-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Tuition increases at public higher education institutions limited.

HF902-Gunther (R)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Minnesota Biomedical Science Research Facilities Authority and the biomedical sciences research project funding program established, funds provided and reports required.

HF903-Severson (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Federal Montgomery GI Bill for the Selected Reserves; Congressional reform exhorted to permit members of the National Guard and Reserves to receive and use federal educational benefits following separation from active status and discharge.

HF904-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Land acquisition, landowners' bill of rights and mineral interest record requirements modified; state park additions and deletions provided; and public and private sales and conveyances of state lands authorized.

HF905-Scalze (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Cities to operate preventative health services programs authorized.

HF906-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Birth defects information system money appropriated.

HF907-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Independently licensed mental health care professionals authorized to deliver service to inmates.

HF908-Liebling (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Quality assurance system to include additional service recipients expanded; sunset dates removed.

HF909-Jaros (DFL)**Finance**

Duluth Children's Museum to expand the early childhood learning spaces.

HF910-Jaros (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Respite care in relative custody assistance cases provided.

HF911-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Self-directed personal supports option established; Minnesota supplemental aid standard modified.

HF912-Hornstein (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MFIP and child care provisions modified; foreign operating corporation provisions changed and clarified.

HF913-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Moratorium regarding beds and expending group residential housing supplemental rates waived.

HF914-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare four-month uninsured requirement for children eliminated.

HF915-Ruth (R)**Health & Human Services**

Payment rates for nursing facilities in Steele County to the geographic group III median rate increased.

HF916-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Child care centers and homes inspections and reports required.

HF917-Clark (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Lice and scabies treatment products that contain the pesticide Lindane prohibited.

HF918-Norton (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Essential community provider designation extended.

HF919-Welti (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Elgin, Eyota, Byron and Oronoco authorized to act as small cities for purposes of use of revenues from certain economic development districts.

HF920-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child care provisions modified and MFIP and basic sliding fee child care programs consolidated.

Tuesday, February 13

HF921-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

Tree-planting income tax credit provided.

HF922-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Mental health provisions modified, provider rate increases authorized, medical assistance coverage modified and evidence-based practice implemented.

HF923-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Mental health fatality review team established.

HF924-Dominguez (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Unpaid work for cash assistance prohibited.

HF925-Lenczewski (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Renewable energy standard modified.

HF926-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

Septic systems' impact on the environment study provided through the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

HF927-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Equity, transition and referendum revenue programs equalizing factor increased.

HF928-Dill (DFL)**Taxes**

Shooting range targets sales specified as a sale of property for resale.

HF929-Ruud (DFL)**Taxes**

Minnetonka water treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF930-Dean (R)**Taxes**

Health insurance premiums income tax subtraction authorized.

HF931-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited and civil and criminal penalties imposed.

HF932-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 279, Osseo, Northwest Hennepin Family Center funding provided.

HF933-Tillberry (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Vehicle Protection Product Act adopted.

HF934-Clark (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Polybrominated diphenyl ether manufacture and sale restricted.

HF935-Scalze (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed the Minnesota Intercounty Association.

HF936-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Crisis Intervention Team State Council established.

HF937-Brynaert (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota State University, Mankato, Trafton Hall phase 2 funding provided.

HF938-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities tuition stability provided.

HF939-Kranz (DFL)**Finance**

Deed tax percentage adjusted, rental housing assistance provided and housing account for leverage opportunity established.

HF940-Lenczewski (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Schools educational mission and competitive extracurricular programs advisory task force established.

HF941-Lenczewski (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Open enrollment transfer student ineligibility for postseason tournament competition criteria specified.

HF942-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

HIV information and referral service provided.

HF943-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Deemed dividend corporate franchise tax deduction for foreign operating corporations limited.

HF944-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Fishing; Let's Go Fishing grants provided to promote fishing opportunities.

HF945-Juhnke (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Fishing opportunities endowment account established.

HF946-Lieder (DFL)

Finance
Motor fuel and motor vehicle taxes increased, county transportation taxes authorized, transportation impact fees imposed, and highway and bridge construction provided.

HF947-Howes (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local government nonconforming lot use requirements limited.

HF948-Moe (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Clean water legacy account modified, lottery net proceeds deposit modified and clean water funding provided.

HF949-Moe (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Great Outdoors Council and fund established; Clean Water Council modified.

Thursday, February 15

HF950-Carlson (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Fourth Judicial District obsolete references and provisions removed, unintentional repeal corrected and bail proceeds payment resumed for Hennepin County municipalities.

HF951-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Controlled substance sales criminal offender geographic restrictions policies established, increased sentences provided for further drug sale crimes in a restricted area and criminal penalties imposed.

HF952-Howes (R)

Finance
Ice skating rinks and arena grants provided.

HF953-Kahn (DFL)

Finance
State government general legislative and administrative funding provided, state and local government operations regulated and grant management process established, and money appropriated.

HF954-Welti (DFL)

Finance
Agricultural research funding provided to the University of Minnesota.

HF955-Nornes (R)

Taxes
Federal income tax conformity provided relating to federal rules on section 179 expensing retroactively.

HF956-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Bloomington fiscal disparities pool contribution obligation eliminated.

HF957-Zellers (R)

Taxes
Homestead property tax maximum imposed for qualified homeowners age 65 and older.

HF958-Solberg (DFL)

Finance
State agencies deficiency funding provided.

HF959-Bunn (DFL)

Finance
I-94 corridor transportation and transit improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF960-Simpson (R)

Environment & Natural Resources
Deer hunting license fees for non-resident youth provided at resident rate.

HF961-Ruud (DFL)

Finance
Eden Prairie veterans memorial funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF962-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Commercial and industrial properties general tax converted to a site value tax, site value standards authorized, and estimated market value attributable to land portion reallocated.

HF963-Ruth (R)

Finance
Local bridge replacement and rehabilitation and local road improvement program funding provided, bonds issued.

HF964-Ruth (R)

Finance
Motor vehicle sales tax proceeds allocated.

HF965-McFarlane (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Election judges not affiliated with a major political party appointment provided.

HF966-Howes (R)

Commerce & Labor
Nurse overtime orders of compliance authorized.

HF967-Koenen (DFL)

Taxes
Income tax additions eliminated.

HF968-Koenen (DFL)

Taxes
Grain bins and fencing materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF969-Simpson (R)

Taxes
Tier I homestead resorts market value modified.

HF970-Demmer (R)

Health & Human Services
Dodge and other specified counties nursing facilities payment rates increased to the Olmsted County median rate.

HF971-Hosch (DFL)

Finance
Senior citizen programs funding provided.

HF972-Huntley (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities, community service providers, and nursing facilities rate increase provided; and money appropriated.

HF973-Clark (DFL)

Finance
Employment support for persons with mental illness authorized.

HF974-Otremba (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Children's therapeutic services and supports rate increase provided.

HF975-Koenen (DFL)

Finance
Comprehensive school reform funding provided to replace reduced federal funds.

HF976-Slawik (DFL)

E-12 Education
After-school community learning grant program established.

HF977-Davnie (DFL)

Finance
Special education excessive costs state payment required and program growth factor increased.

HF978-Hortman (DFL)

Finance
Independent School District No. 11, Anoka-Hennepin, authorized to purchase and restore native prairie and wetland adjacent to Riverview Elementary School; bonds issued; and money appropriated.

HF979-Winkler (DFL)

Finance
Adult basic education aid modified and GED payment increased.

HF980-Knuth (DFL)

Finance
Referendum aid adjustment modified for open enrollment students.

HF981-Brown (DFL)

Finance
State special education revenue formulas fully funded, and special education aid appropriation made open and standing.

HF982-Norton (DFL)

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

HF983-Ward (DFL)

E-12 Education
Career academies and workplace connection three-year pilot project established.

HF984-Norton (DFL)

E-12 Education
Student ACT and SAT entrance test fees reimbursed, and money appropriated.

HF985-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education
Board of School Administrators rule-making authority extended.

HF986-Erickson (R)

E-12 Education
Dual-credit course and program requirements provided for high school students and 3R high school grants provided.

HF987-Davnie (DFL)

Finance
Contract alternative program students over the age of 21 authorized to receive instruction until graduation.

HF988-Winkler (DFL)

E-12 Education
Technology task force and grants established for schools and school district technology plan developed.

HF989-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education
Open enrollment students authorized to participate in academic courses and extracurricular and cocurricular activities on the same basis as resident district students.

HF990-Norton (DFL)

E-12 Education
Parent and family involvement school district policies required.

HF991-Thissen (DFL)

Commerce & Labor
Interior designers certification changed to licensing requirements.

HF992-Otremba (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Abortion; state-sponsored health program funding prohibited for use in funding abortions.

HF993-Norton (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Radon control federal building codes adopted.

HF994-Urdahl (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Act adopted prohibited actions for weight gain as a result of consuming certain foods.

HF995-Hilty (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Peak Oil; Governor memorialized, by resolution, to take action to prepare a plan of response and preparation to meet the challenges of Peak Oil.

HF996-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Tax data classification and disclosure provisions clarified and modified, and class 1b homestead declarations administration and classification provided.

HF997-Kahn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Off-sale wine licenses authorized for supermarkets.

HF998-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government purchases sales tax eliminated.

HF999-Mahoney (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Child's residence in foreign country consideration required when deviating from presumptive child support amount.

HF1000-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Consolidating school districts account flexibility created; and Independent School District No. 2899, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, fund balance adjustment authorized.

HF1001-Carlson (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teacher retirement plans reemployed annuitant earnings limitation amount increased for part-time and substitute teachers.

HF1002-Hornstein (DFL)**Taxes**

Alternative fuel vehicle income tax credit provided.

HF1003-Koenen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota River Trail segment established connecting Granite Falls and Montevideo.

HF1004-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited.

HF1005-Lenczewski (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Municipal postemployment benefits for retired officers and employees authorized.

HF1006-Dettmer (R)**E-12 Education**

Statewide health and physical education requirements provided, school wellness policies posted on Education Department Web site, grant program established for local school wellness policies.

HF1007-Bunn (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006 to the federal teacher expense deduction, tuition subtraction, and other provisions of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act, Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunity Act and Pension Protection Plan.

HF1008-Johnson (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Child placement background check requirements modified.

HF1009-Hansen (DFL)**Taxes**

Sesquicentennial celebration income tax checkoff provided and fund established.

HF1010-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Gang and Drug Oversight Council statewide coordinator added to the law enforcement retirement fund.

HF1011-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

I-35W corridor transit way feasibility study funding provided.

HF1012-Otremba (DFL)**Taxes**

Rural land abutting public waters valuation provided.

HF1013-Otremba (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Body piercing services prohibited for persons under the age of 18 without parental consent, and criminal and civil penalties imposed.

HF1014-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

Easements; modifying the price of surplus easement or property acquired for transportation purposes and offered for reconveyance to original owner.

HF1015-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Restroom access for customers regulated.

HF1016-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Forest pest control measures provided.

HF1017-Brod (R)**Finance**

Le Sueur County lake cleanup funding provided.

HF1018-Hausman (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State general obligation bond proceeds provisions modified.

HF1019-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory offender registration required for certain persons under the age of 18.

HF1020-Johnson (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul summer youth employment grants provided, and money appropriated.

HF1021-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Lake Superior commercial fishing provisions modified.

HF1022-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Rental vehicle no-fault auto insurance coverage regulated.

HF1023-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child support enforcement programs funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1024-Wagenius (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources; agency service requirements, drainage repair and abandonment requirements, wetlands replacement requirements and exemptions modified; civil enforcement provided; and money appropriated.

HF1025-Peppin (R)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Nuclear fuel storage; existing prohibition preventing Public Utilities Commission from issuing certificate of need for new nuclear power plant abolished.

HF1026-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Anoka County bicycle and pedestrian trail funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1027-Kahn (DFL)**Taxes**

Cosmetic procedures sales tax imposed.

HF1028-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Darwin wastewater holding ponds design funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1029-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Toll-free telephone line maintained to receive allegations of theft of public funds or property and rewards authorized.

HF1030-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Low-income rental property classification 4d extended.

HF1031-Anderson, S. (R)**Finance**

I-494 median safety barrier construction funding provided.

HF1032-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

Nonresident undergraduate tuition rates at state colleges and universities regulated.

HF1033-Simon (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Employer retaliation protections expanded.

HF1034-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Heating and cooling policy for state building projects established.

HF1035-Solberg (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Itasca County; tax-forfeited land assurance fee exemptions provided for certain exchanged land.

HF1036-Pelowski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Lobbying activities related to a ballot question exempted from campaign finance reporting requirements.

HF1037-Hosch (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Reconveyance procedures established for real property having errors or omissions in the title.

HF1038-Hosch (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Trunk Highway 23 encroached-upon right-of-way reconveyance required.

HF1039-Brown (DFL)**Finance**

Albert Lea remedial waste systems construction funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1040-Howes (R)**Finance**

Ice skating rinks and arenas grants provided.

HF1041-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Controlled substances prescription electronic reporting system established.

HF1042-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Hennepin and Ramsey Counties mortgage registry and deed tax authority expiration removed.

HF1043-Simon (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory offenders required to register electronic mail addresses and related information to law enforcement.

HF1044-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Student health insurance grant programs established.

HF1045-Dominguez (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

State lottery gross proceeds in lieu of sales tax distribution for metropolitan parks and open space clarified, and parks and open space commission member compensation modified.

HF1046-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Dog and Cat Breeders Act providing standards of care, and appropriating money.

HF1047-Tschumper (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence certification recognized, fees provided, and drug use and prescription regulated.

HF1048-Pelowski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Department of Employee Relations abolished and duties transferred.

HF1049-Liebling (DFL)**Finance**

Pipeline violations fines increased.

HF1050-Paymar (DFL)**Finance**

Alcoholic beverage tax increased, county probation supervision and treatment services grants provided.

HF1051-Hilty (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Indian Affairs Council membership and other provisions modified.

HF1052-Thao (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans appointment process and membership modified.

HF1053-Olin (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Theft of a computer that contains identity information about the owner or any other person felony penalty imposed.

HF1054-Morgan (DFL)**Taxes**

Burnsville special tax increment financing districts authorized.

HF1055-Kahn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

State lottery ticket sales on state fairgrounds authorized.

HF1056-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Early childhood education provisions modified.

HF1057-Urdahl (R)**E-12 Education**

New teachers induction program established relating to high-need subject areas and schools.

HF1058-Thissen (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Automatic enforcement of official traffic-control devices authorized.

HF1059-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Drivers required to possess a valid and unexpired driver's license.

HF1060-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver's license required information modified.

HF1061-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver's license cancellation provisions modified.

HF1062-Simon (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver education provisions modified.



Politicians access Super Bowl tickets

Nearly one-third of the [Indiana General Assembly](#) was able to see in person the Indianapolis Colts win the Super Bowl.

The team offered to sell two tickets at \$600 face value to state lawmakers, members of Congress, the City-County Council and some municipal groups. About 175 tickets were sold.

According to [WISH-TV](#), a spokeswoman for Colts owner Jim Irsay said he "wanted to offer tickets to public servants who make the community better."

The tickets are not gifts; therefore, legislators and councilors do not need to report it.

"Because of all the scrutiny this has been under, I'm certainly going to put it down," Joanne Sanders, a member of the City-County Council, told the station.

The Indianapolis Star [reported](#) that 10 state senators and 35 representatives were among those [purchasing tickets](#). The Indiana Legislature has 100 representatives and 50 senators.

Not surprisingly, a [forum](#) on the newspaper's Web site contained posts from upset Colts fans.

"I don't see how anyone can not look at this as a perk even if they had to purchase the tickets at face value. They didn't have to stay in the cold and have their names entered into a lottery to have the opportunity to buy the tickets. They should have been at the mercy of the lottery process just like everyone else. I'm tired of our politicians acting like CEO's of companies," wrote someone posting under the name "Fairness."

Others said they would have done the same thing.

"How can you blame them for buying the tickets offered to them? If someone offered me tickets for the game, at face value, I'd have been in Sunny Miami. And so would you! This is a non-issue," wrote someone posting as "Reality Check."

[Rep. Ralph Foley](#) (R-Martinsville), who reportedly accepted the offer, speculated it could have been a way to thank legislators for passing legislation for a new stadium.

"Evidently they don't check your voting record when they offer them, or perhaps I wouldn't have been on the list," Foley told [WRTV-TV](#).

(M. Cook)

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MINNESOTA INDEX

The friendly skies

| | |
|---|----------|
| Publicly accessible airports in the state..... | 155 |
| Number that are paved | 98 |
| Number that are lighted turf | 17 |
| Year the Metropolitan Airports Commission was created by the Legislature to promote safe, efficient, environmentally responsible air transportation services in the Twin Cities metropolitan area | 1943 |
| Passengers, in millions, served at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in 2006 | 35.6 |
| Millions in 2002..... | 32.6 |
| Millions projected in 2020..... | 50 |
| Estimated takeoffs and landings, in millions, at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and its six reliever airports in 2006 | 1.2 |
| Number at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport | 475,656 |
| Estimated number at Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie | 144,000 |
| Estimated number at Holman Field in St. Paul | 126,000 |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport rank among busiest airfields in the country ... | 12 |
| Airline companies that provide regularly scheduled service to the airport..... | 13 |
| Percent of service provided by Northwest Airlines, as approximate | 80 |
| Number of metropolitan markets flyers can travel to nonstop from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport | 131 |
| Number that are domestic..... | 116 |
| Estimated millions of visitors that come to the Twin Cities metropolitan area annually via the airport..... | 6.5 |
| Percent of travelers living outside the area..... | 70 |
| Estimated commission revenues in 2007, in millions..... | \$252.8 |
| Percent from airport concessions | 45 |
| Percent from airline rates and charges | 34 |
| State and local tax revenues received by the commission..... | 0 |
| Millions, as approximate, spent thus far by the commission to soundproof homes and schools against aircraft noise from planes using Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport..... | \$340 |
| Single-family homes that have been mitigated from noise since 1996..... | 7,690 |
| Cost per home in the highest noise-level exposure areas, as approximate..... | \$45,000 |
| Cost to homeowner | 0 |
| Year the nation's first Air National Guard Squadron charter was issued to the Minnesota Air Guard | 1921 |

Sources: Presentation to the House Transportation Finance Division Feb. 8 by Jeff Hamiel, executive director, Metropolitan Airports Commission; [Office of Aeronautics, Minnesota Department of Transportation](#); [Minnesota Aviation History Museum](#).

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SESSION WEEKLY

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LGA — THE GREAT EQUALIZER
CALLING ALL ANIMALS
CUBA CONNECTION

HF1063- HF1337

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Jacob Hakes, from left, Austyn Colas, Eli Grayson and Charlie Whiting from Cub Scout Pack 408 in Shoreview learn about the voting buttons on a members' desk in the House Chamber from Rep. Steve Simon prior to the Feb. 19 floor session. The Capitol hats are available from House Public Information Services.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

The great equalizer

Police, streets and service — cities ask: 'Where's our LGA?'

By SONJA HEGMAN

The "Minnesota Miracle" is not quite the phenomenon it was 36 years ago. The program's goal was to ensure residents received adequate services without large differences in taxes. It also changed school funding by placing the burden for money onto the state rather than local sources.

Local Government Aid was a piece of the program and has been anything but helpful in recent years. Cities across the state have taken a hit, losing some or all of the money since 2003.

In 2003, the new Local Government Aid formula became need-based, causing cities to never know what they will receive from one year to the next.

Baxter lost all of its LGA in 2003. Before the program was reformed, the city would have gotten about \$128,000 in 2003, down from \$353,000 the previous year. Though all of that money was cut, the city has not had to cut services, but it did have to levy more taxes.

"That's never very popular," said Dennis Coryell, Baxter city administrator.

But the highest impact to the city came

when \$201,000 in Homestead and Agricultural Credit Aid was cut. Coryell said that money had helped keep property taxes in check. But, even with the LGA and HACA cuts, property taxes haven't risen astronomically because Baxter has a large commercial tax base.

Situated next to Brainerd, Baxter is considered a regional center for shopping and other services. With a population of just 7,800, the city sees 60,000 to 80,000 people per day with many big box stores, like Target and Best Buy. Coryell said the city has to pay increased costs for utilities for those added people. The rates for the city's water and sewer are among the top one-third in the state. The lost LGA money might have gone to either keep utility rates down or help to fund a wastewater treatment plant the city is constructing with

Brainerd, Coryell said.

To obtain needed dollars, Baxter added a half-cent sales tax. Collections started in October and will last for 12 years. The tax is estimated to generate \$1 million in revenue in the first year, which Coryell said will help offset some of the city's utility costs.

One piece of the tax puzzle

LGA is designed to go to cities that are the least able to provide an adequate level of services with an average tax rate. But all cities took a hit to that aid in 2003.

"If you don't give aid to those cities, they'll probably have higher than average tax rates and still won't be able to provide services," said Pat Dalton from the nonpartisan House Research Department.

With property tax relief on the agenda this session, [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), chairman of the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division, said property tax relief is something that has to hit every area of the state and must be permanent.

"We have to make sure anything we do carries into the future," he said. And LGA is just one piece of the puzzle in property tax reform.

LGA helps keep property taxes down, but also helps fund services like police, Marquart said. LGA increases will primarily help Minneapolis, St. Paul and rural areas. Because it's need-based, many suburban cities, that

First Reading continued on page 4



Photo courtesy of Officer Daniel Gates, Centennial Lakes Police Department

The Centennial Lakes Police Department moved into its new building in 2006 after being crammed in the basement of Circle Pines City Hall. The move was necessary, but also added to the city's tax burden.

have higher tax bases, don't receive it.

Marquart said a property tax package has to include school levy reductions, market value homestead credit expansions and property tax refund expansions to include the cities receiving aid and those who are not.

"LGA is the great equalizer," he said. "It's the lifeblood for cities that need it."

The idea behind LGA was that no matter where a person lives in the state they could have roughly the same general services — like law enforcement, street departments and fire departments — at roughly the same cost, Marquart said.

High taxes vs. cuts

In Circle Pines, property taxes have increased 60 percent since 2003, in part because of the phasing out of its LGA, said City Administrator Jim Keinath.

"Residents have complained about the high taxes and we say, 'Yeah, you're right. What do you want us to cut?'" Keinath said. "There is no reasonable thing to cut. We're a small city and can't cut essential services."

Considered part of the Twin Cities metro area, Circle Pines, with a population of just more than 5,000, gradually lost nearly \$253,000 in LGA over three years, getting nothing by 2005. In 2006, cities with less than 5,000 residents started receiving \$6 per capita in LGA because they do not receive municipal state aid.

The city has made \$100,000 in cuts, Keinath said. Many cuts hit parks and recreation, but cuts were distributed throughout the city. In addition, the city had to build a police station in 2005 because its police department was crammed into the basement of the city hall, also affecting property taxes.

The 2003 reform

The LGA program has constantly evolved since its inception in 1971. Called the "Minnesota Miracle," it used to go to all local governments but changed into a city-only program.

In 1989, how much a city received in aid depended on how much was levied in the past, Dalton said. If a city levied more, it would get more aid. But because nobody really liked that, she said every year the formula was modified. In 1993, formulas were developed by the League of Minnesota Cities that stayed in place until 2003.

The further the state got from 1993, the more people started saying there were things not quite measured in the formula, Dalton said. In 2002, the state hit the budget crisis, so the governor decided to rework the formula.

This was decided, Dalton said, because cities that had need in 1993 might not need it anymore.

So, in the 2003 reform, the LGA formula became need-based. For cities with populations of 2,500 or less, the aid is determined by population, population decline, housing built before 1940 and the percent of property classified as commercial/industrial. The formula for all other cities is based on population decline, housing built before 1940, road accident rate, average household size and city location.

From 1993 until 2003, cities were guaranteed a certain amount of aid every year. City LGA was reduced to \$465 million in calendar year 2003 from the originally certified appropriation of \$587 million. It was reduced further in calendar year 2004 to \$429 million with an additional \$8 million paid in transition aid for one year. In 2005, the appropriation was set at \$437 million annually.

When the new formula was instituted, the state decided to gradually phase cities' aid up or down so everyone would eventually be at the same level. No city can go up or down more than 10 percent of its previous year's levy. But the aid was increased \$48 million to \$485 million annually beginning with calendar year 2006.

Since cities were being phased up and down, 300 cities were already getting their maximum aid under the 10 percent cap before the extra money was added. The additional money went to cities that weren't at the maximum cap.

"Suddenly all of these cities got lots of aid," Dalton said. Because of the cap it couldn't go to cities, which under the formula, should have gotten it.


That changed again in 2007.

The cap comes off

Dalton said all of the cities that were at the cap are now uncapped because they could go up by 10 percent of the 2006 levy. All money that should have gone to capped cities according to the formula in 2006 is going to them in 2007, and that money is coming from the cities that received it in 2006.

"That had a significant impact," Dalton said.

The state knew Minneapolis and St. Paul weren't capped. A lot of cities didn't realize they got an increase in 2006 until they saw a loss in 2007.

The governor has proposed another \$10 million increase for LGA in his 2008-09 budget, but many legislators have said that's "just a drop in the bucket" to get the aid back to its pre-reform level. 

Big city concerns

Gov. Tim Pawlenty proposed an increase to Local Government Aid in his 2008-09 biennial budget. The extra \$10 million would be added in 2007, but cities of 100,000 or more would have to use any LGA increase for public safety. This affects only Minneapolis and St. Paul. If passed, it has the potential of affecting other cities in the future, as some are approaching 100,000 in population.

"The governor's proposal was outrageous because it exclusively discriminated against two highly DFL cities and totally controlled their use of the money," [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) said.

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said Pawlenty's inspiration for this proposed mandate came from a bill introduced last session by Mullery. His bill would have given Minneapolis extra aid to help stem the very high crime rates in poorer neighborhoods. But Mullery does not want LGA money to be designated for anything.

Increases in regular LGA could go toward many city services that would help his north Minneapolis community, in addition to police and fire, Mullery said. He added that prosecutors, housing inspectors, initiatives for youth activities and health workers, among others, would help the city and make law enforcement more effective. These are the same things that were cut when LGA was lost in 2003.

Mullery said his bill last year would have been similar to a special aid program that used to go directly to counties to be used only for crime-related costs.

Minneapolis lost \$26 million in 2003 and \$9 million more in 2004.

On the other side of the river, St. Paul lost \$35 million in LGA funds in 2003.

"It's been critical to our city for the quality of life people expect," said [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul). "We've tried to hold the line on property tax increases, but the city has no choice but to raise its property tax levy."

He doesn't want any LGA increases to be dedicated.

"It's a bad precedent and sort of a slap in the face to our cities," he said. "There's an inference that somehow the chiefs of police, mayors and city councils of Minneapolis and St. Paul don't care about public safety or are somehow irresponsible with their decision making relative to LGA. That simply is not true."

After inflation, Paymar said St. Paul's proposed 2007 LGA increase would be less than \$1 million. Minneapolis would see about \$2 million. Others say it looks like one-time money.

(S. HEGMAN)

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Feb. 15-22 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

BIOSCIENCE

University facility

A process to use \$279 million of state general obligation bonds for a biomedical science research facility, to be owned and operated by the University of Minnesota, was approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 21.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF132](#) establishes a bonding process for the facility of which the state would pay 90 percent and the university would match 10 percent. The bill also includes the membership makeup of the Minnesota Biomedical Sciences Research Facilities Authority to oversee the facility and authorize grants, and establishes a sunset of June 30, 2019, for bonding authority once all projects have been completed in establishing the facility.

Other facilities have taken up to eight years to get through funding processes, and the bioscience industry in Minnesota used to be tops in the nation, Mahoney said.

Because of the reluctance of "this Legislature and this state to make a commitment to this university and its research facilities we are not there any longer," he added.

[Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, asked if other university bonding requests would be lowered because of the amount needed to build the facility. He also voiced concerns in how the bill gives bonding approval to the authority on the project.

Richard Pfutzenreuter, chief financial officer for the university, said he didn't know what the president and Board of Regents would be making for other bonding requests.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A companion, [SF265](#), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

BONDING

Asian cultural center

The House passed a bill that would allow the Asian Pacific Cultural Center access to \$400,000 approved in last year's bonding law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF87](#) simply inserts the word "predesign" that was omitted from the bonding proposal last year. Because of this, the center could not get access to funds approved for its building project.

Approved 124-8 Feb. 19, the bill was sent to the Senate where [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is the sponsor. It now awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The estimated \$6 million center is to be located at the former Hamms Brewery site on Minnehaha Avenue in St. Paul. Four contiguous buildings are to be retrofitted to create the center. Current plans call for a multi-level building of about 65,000-square feet with a gallery and library center, a banquet room that will accommodate up to 500 people, a 265-seat theater designed for performing arts and cinematic viewing, the center's administrative office, a commercial kitchen, a gift shop, 15-20 offices for tenants and 15-20 classrooms.

— S. HEGMAN

Sewer flood prevention

A southeastern Minnesota city would like help staying dry.

Sponsored by [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault), [HF109](#) would appropriate \$1.5 million to Blooming Prairie to design and construct storm sewer, sanitary water, water main and street improvements for the city's north corridor, which has experienced flooding in the past few years. The bill was held over Feb. 15 by the House Capital Investment Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

"We don't have a river, lake or pond close to us," said Mike Jones, Blooming Prairie city administrator. "We're not even on the flood plain because we are so far away from any water. We're dealing with a community that is growing and we can't continue to tax our taxpayers to bring infrastructure that is needed to continue to grow."

In September 2004, the city received 12 inches of rain in eight hours. About 400 homes had flood damage because of sanitary sewer backups and surface flooding. Flood damage also occurred in 1993, 1999 and 2000. The proposed improvements would serve a

204-acre watershed and would significantly decrease flood potential by increasing the current storm sewer capacity 4.5 times over the existing system.

A companion bill, [SF64](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dick Day](#) (R-Owatonna), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

CONSUMERS

Removing restrictions on Cuba

Removing trade and travel restrictions with Cuba could bring in millions of dollars for the state according to several testifiers in the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 20.

Ralph Kaehler, a Minnesota farmer, said Cuba has the potential of being a top trading partner of certain agricultural goods such as powdered milk. From 2001 to 2004, Cuba imported \$100 million in powdered milk, and is currently the fourth largest importer from the United States, he said.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsors [HF828](#) and [HR2](#) that would encourage fewer trade, travel and financial restrictions to Cuba. Both say, "Minnesota is ideally positioned to benefit from the market opportunities that free trade with Cuba would provide, as trade restrictions succeed only in driving sales to competitors in other countries that have no such restrictions."

Both were approved and sent to the House Floor. There was no opposition.

A resolution "gives a body the chance to speak with the voice of the body," Kahn said. It may not be better than a letter to a congressman or governor, but it is a magnification of that voice, she said.

Companion to the bill, [SF599](#), is sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy). It awaits action in the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee. There is no companion to HR2.

— P. OSTBERG

Social Security restrictions

A bill to limit the use of Social Security numbers was weakened after compromises were made with stakeholders, said [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), the sponsor of [HF131](#) in the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 15.

The bill would still restrict a person or entity from using Social Security numbers for certain purposes. This includes selling,

loaning, trading, renting or otherwise disclosing a Social Security number to a third party without written consent to the individual, if the person knows or reasonably believes the third party lacks a legitimate purpose for obtaining the individual's Social Security number.

Hilstrom removed language that would have restricted transmission of a Social Security number over the Internet unless it was essential to the transaction, and changed the word "instead" to say "necessary" to the transaction. She also removed from her original bill restrictions that would apply unless the number was required or authorized by state or federal law.

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said he would have a hard time supporting a "super-sized hole" in the bill created by the changed language.

Hilstrom said the bill would still provide protection for consumers. "If the transaction does not require the Social Security number, you ought not be using it," she said.

The change is in response to a 2005 law scheduled to take effect July 1, 2007, that would, in part, restrict businesses from printing a Social Security number on a card needed to utilize the business products or services, or put a person's number on materials mailed to them. However, the 2005 law will exempt certain businesses that are already using the numbers for certain purposes. HF131 would remove the exemption.

The amended language is consistent with what other states have passed regarding Social Security privacy laws, said Mark Ireland, assistant attorney general in the office's Consumer Division.

The bill language may be included in an omnibus data privacy bill. The bill now goes to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

A companion bill, [SF793](#), sponsored by [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Funding short-term offender housing

A 2003 law shifted the responsibility of housing short-term offenders from the state to the counties, but did not include extra funding.

In efforts to give counties financial relief for housing the offenders, Reps. [Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) are sponsoring [HF684](#) and [HF492](#), respectively. Each was approved by the House Public Safety

and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 20.

If an offender is given a prison sentence of less than six months, or if an offender violates their probation and has less than six months to serve, he or she serves out their time in a county jail. The state now pays counties \$9 a day for each short-term offender, when the average cost of incarceration is \$55 a day.

Paymar's bill would appropriate \$6.45 million in each year of the next biennium to counties for housing short-term felons, with the maximum daily reimbursement at \$70. The bill awaits action by the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF417](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), was laid over

Feb. 19 by the Senate Public Safety Budget Division.

Haws' bill would establish a task force to evaluate the short-term offender program and provide suggestions for improvement. The task force would include representatives from the Department of Corrections, the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, county attorneys, public defenders and probation officers. The bill's next stop is the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

A companion bill, [SF556](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

ART PORTAL

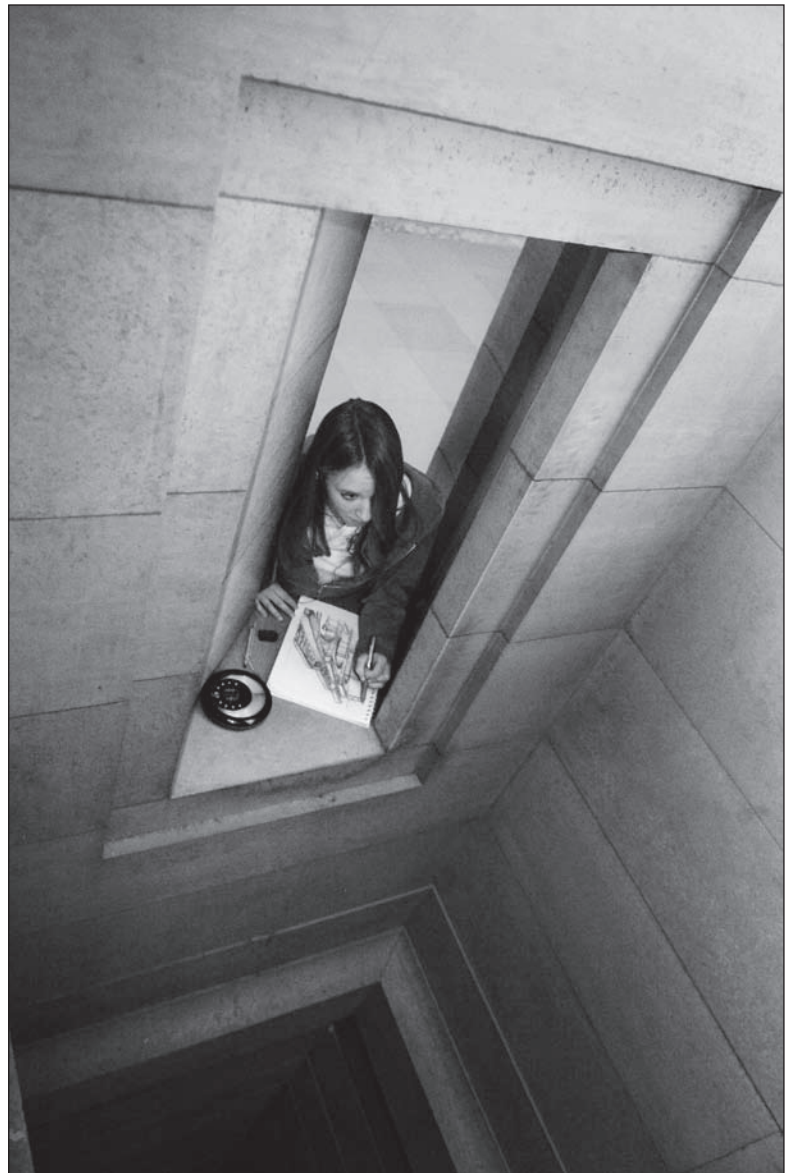


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Colleen Peters, a sophomore at Providence Academy in Plymouth, uses a portal at the base of the Supreme Court grand stairway to work on an architectural sketch of a portion of the Capitol building Feb. 13.

Mentors needed

If children are the future, we must nurture them and provide discipline.

This is the focus of two bills laid over by the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 20 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

[HF460](#), sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would allocate \$620,000 to the All Children Excel Program in Ramsey County; and [HF342](#), sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), proposes awarding \$500,000 to nonprofit organizations that provide one-to-one mentoring programs to children whose parent or other significant family member is incarcerated.

Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt said the ACE Program, started in 1999, is an early intervention program for offenders ages 6 to 9, who are at high risk of committing serious and violent crimes. The program works with the children over a number of years, often until they are 18 years old, helping them to make positive contributions to their community.

Eight percent of the youth population is responsible for 70 percent of the crimes committed by youth, Reinhardt said.

Paymar said that one out of every 40 children in Minnesota has a parent who is incarcerated. The purpose of the mentoring programs is to make sure that these children don't end up in the justice system as well. Resources and positive relationships must be available for these children to succeed, Paymar said.

Gloria Lewis, president and CEO of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities, said that her organization's goal is to be a prevention program. "We want to stop people from going to jail," Lewis said.

Pete Rhodes, a mentor in the program, said that it's important to provide youth with hope and discipline, and to help them become productive citizens in their communities.

Two companion bills, [SF344](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), and [SF99](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), await action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— C. GREEN

Stolen car relief

When someone has their car stolen, often they have to pay to get it back.

[HF425](#) is an effort to give victims some relief.

Sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill proposes to expand a grant account to provide emergency assistance to reimburse a crime victim for fees incurred when their stolen car is impounded. It was approved by the House Public Safety and Civil

Justice Committee Feb. 15 and referred to the House Public Safety Finance Division.

The companion, [SF1005](#), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, "the grant program currently provides assistance to crime victims for replacing broken doors and windows, installing security devices and cleaning up crime scenes."

Jennifer Nodes, executive director of the Minnesota General Crime Victim Coalition, said that for the victims, auto theft is more than an inconvenience. There are new transportation costs to get to work and medical appointments, days of work are missed and credit card debts increase to pay for retrieving cars.

Money for the program would come from the Auto Theft Protection Program, with grants—to a maximum of \$300—distributed by local prosecutors and victim assistance programs. Those who receive reimbursement from their insurance companies are not eligible.

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Community education funding

Minnesota adults that are in need of basic skills instruction could see a funding increase for the programs they use to better themselves.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), [HF138](#) would raise the amount a district could levy to support general community education. On Feb. 20, the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division laid the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The bill would raise the amount that a district can levy from \$5.42 per pupil unit in fiscal year 2007 to \$5.95 times the greater of 2,000 or the population of the district beginning in fiscal year 2008.

"Over 900,000 adults statewide participate in one or more adult education programs," said Mary O'Brien, Youth and Family Services program manager for St. Louis Park Community Education, adding that 1.7 million youth are served by one or more programs.

More than 82,000 adults are helped statewide by Adult Basic Education, one of several programs that are included in adult education. This program provides basic academic skills to help participants earn their GED, gain citizenship, get better employment and enter post-secondary education.

"The cost for everything has risen over the past 20 years and community education has not been immune to that. As good as we are, we have just about maxed out of what we can do with less," O'Brien said.

A companion bill, [SF203](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Alternative school success

Alternative learning schools can have a stigma of only having "bad kids" and students that have fallen through the cracks.

Ryan Tanttila and Katrina Blankenship testified Feb. 19 before the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division to dispel the myth. No action was taken.

"I slipped through the cracks. ... I was bored with the material in class and that boredom led to rebellious behavior and I would get expelled," Tanttila said of his experience at a regular high school. He enrolled at the Phoenix Learning Center in Buffalo, graduated high school, went to St. Cloud State University and now is a language arts teacher. "I got more individual attention instead of the negative attention I was getting at the high school and that was what I needed," he said.

Students attend alternative learning schools for many reasons, including truancy problems, expulsion, falling academically behind their grade level, pregnancy and homelessness. At the schools, students work at their own pace, enjoy small class sizes and receive one-on-one attention with teachers. According to Tanttila, the most important things he learned are good study habits and time management skills.

Blankenship is a senior at the Plymouth Youth Center. "I couldn't complete assignments on time. I did hear that alternative schools were bad, it was a school for bad kids but a friend told me to try it out," she said.

She enjoys school now. "Teachers care for you as a person, and if you have problems they will help you with them." When she completes her schooling, Blankenship wants to open either a restaurant or a coffee shop. "I'm graduating next year, I'm graduating a little late but I am graduating."

— S. HARDING

More children's museum funding

According to [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), the Minnesota Children's Museum is a place where children learn by playing, and is a resource for children across the state.

Slawik, who serves on the museum board, is sponsoring [HF759](#) that would raise state support to the museum from \$260,000 a year

to \$375,000 a year. The House K-12 Finance Division laid it over for possible inclusion into its omnibus bill.

The \$750,000 would be split between maintaining current quality levels and to help create the Pint Size Math and Science Program.

The museum's \$4.9 million annual operating budget comes from admissions, contributions, the gift shop, parking and state funding. It has about 420,000 annual visitors.

"We have a focus on children from newborn to the age of 10," said Museum President Sarah Caruso. "We have a free Sunday each month, all school groups come at subsidized rate, and we give away 2,000 free family memberships," she said. The museum loses \$825,000 in revenue to offer free or reduced admission to families and school groups.

A companion bill, [SF631](#), sponsored by [Sen. Geoff Michel](#) (R-Edina), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Early childhood funding priorities

At-risk parents and children would be given priority to Early Childhood Family Education programs when funds are limited, under a proposed bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield), [HF585](#) was approved Feb. 15 by the House E-12 Education Committee. It now goes to the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division.

The bill would raise the amount of revenue for ECFE programs for school districts from \$112 to \$120 for fiscal year 2008 and beyond times the greater of 180 or the number of children under age 5 in the district on Oct. 1 of the previous year.

The home visiting levy has been altered to allow funds to be used for home and hospital visits for families with newborns, and for educational and social services. The levy amount has been raised from \$1.60 to \$3.20 times the number of people under 5 years old residing in the district on Sept. 1 of the previous school year.

"I know that home visits are cost affective. I just worry that we are becoming too intrusive, and all of a sudden we will have, 'You will have a home visit and everyone will participate,'" said Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan).

"I'm one of these people that doesn't think you should be intrusive," said Lois Engstrom, past chair of the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education. "Families are offered these programs, they don't make unannounced visits even in the hospital, and people are invited into the program. Some families want the contact but don't want someone coming into their homes, and they



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

While speaking about the United Way's Success by Six program, Chris Klimpel, a St. Cloud parent and business owner, displays a small shoe to the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division Feb. 15 to signify children in the first four years of life. Rep. Steve Gottwalt, right, smiles during the presentation.

set up meeting at mutually agreed places. They're not forced on anyone."

A companion bill, [SF579](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

International medical graduates

Legislation that would open more pathways for international medical graduates to prove their credentials awaits action by the House Licensing Subcommittee, which held it over Feb. 19 for consideration in its omnibus bill.

[HF212](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester), essentially revokes legislation passed in 2004 that requires international medical graduates to verify their credentials through a national organization, Federal Credentials Verification Service.

"What this bill does is make it permissive again, not mandatory, so that other avenues can be used for this verification process," she said.

According to Frank Iossi, director of government affairs for the Mayo Clinic, the current law has created a quagmire for the service due to immense workload and demands. The result, he said, is fewer international graduates given the opportunity to work in the United States.

"This has been a complete nightmare," Iossi said. "It has made it very difficult for international medical graduates to get credentialed in the U.S., and very costly, and at times we've have people ... who cannot practice because they've been held up in the bureaucracy."

Iossi estimated that between 15 and 25 graduates are affected each year at the Mayo Clinic.

A companion bill, [SF44](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

International Baccalaureate funding

Minnetonka High School senior KC Garvey Hall knew she wanted to be part of the International Baccalaureate program even before it was offered at her school.

"I loved the way it was described, learning at a deeper level and instead of at a base level," she said.

Now she is studying the more vigorous IB standard-level science and higher-level math. "I think that any program that allows students to create an individual program that is still rigorous is an excellent thing to have at a school."

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF804](#) would allow school districts to access funding that would increase and expand the availability of IB courses. Similar provisions exist for pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement courses.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill Feb. 20. It was heard Feb. 22 by the House K-12 Finance Division which laid it over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The bill would appropriate \$7.3 million for fiscal year 2008 and \$8.11 million for fiscal

year 2009 to help schools either create a new IB program or expand an existing program that leads to IB authorization.

The funds could be used for teacher training and instruction; to improve transition for students between grade levels to better prepare them for succeeding in the program; to purchase books or supplies; or to pay course or program fees.

Similar to pre-AP and AP courses, participating schools would receive funding of \$85 times the number of students enrolled on Oct. 1 of the previous fiscal year.

A companion bill, [SF589](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

School lunch funding

Providing nutritious school lunches for students is a resource that schools must provide.

“Having spent my career in education it didn’t take me long to realize if children are to be successful in school, one of the basic needs was adequate nutrition,” [Rep. John Benson](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) said.

Benson sponsors [HF776](#) that would raise the amount the state must pay participants in the national school lunch program from 10.5 cents to 12 cents for each full, paid, reduced and free student lunch.

The House K-12 Finance Division laid it over Feb. 20 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF1012](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

“This bill is looking for a very moderate increase of 9.3 percent over the biennium,”

Benson said. The biennial cost would be \$3 million.

According to Greg Crowe of the nonpartisan House Fiscal Analysis Department, in fiscal year 2005 the federal government provided \$99 million for the school lunch program and the state provided \$8 million. The state costs in the subsequent two years were \$9 million and \$10.5 million.

In the past few legislative sessions, there have been program and budget cuts to the school lunch program, resulting in districts falling 43 cents short for each lunch served.

“To make up that 43-cent gap, schools started to sell a la carte items because schools are expected to run nutrition programs that are self-supporting,” said Elaine Keefe representing the Minnesota School Nutrition Association. “Unfortunately the most popular a la carte items are low-nutritious items, like a bag of chips,” she said. Schools make a profit off of these items and then subsidize lunch programs with the profits.

The extra funding would allow schools to purchase healthy items like apples to reduce the dependency on low-nutritious snacks.

— S. HARDING

STEM initiative funding

The Science Museum of Minnesota is not only a place of wonder and imagination for families. It is also a resource for teachers’ continuing education programs.

[Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is sponsoring [HF493](#), which would appropriate \$3 million to the museum for the statewide science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiative.

Mariani presented the bill on Feb. 15 to the

House K-12 Finance Division, which held it over for possible consideration in its omnibus bill.

“Hundreds, if not thousands, of teachers receive professional development and training from the Science Museum. This bill would make an appropriation of \$750,000 a year for the Science Museum STEM teacher development and outreach initiative,” Mariani said.

Appropriations for the initiative would be \$3 million for the 2008-09 biennium. Of that, \$750,000 each year would go for expanding and supporting the middle school math and science initiative, including teacher workshops and expanded outreach programs in classrooms.

“Over the next 10 years, economic forecasts project a 20 to 33 percent increase in scientific and technical occupations in Minnesota. If you want a high paying job it will most likely be in STEM areas,” said David Chittenden, vice president of education at the museum. “Minnesota will find skilled scientists and technical workers for the new STEM-driven economy, and they may not be Minnesota students.”

He said that only 11 percent of eighth graders and 10 percent of 10th-grade students have declared an interest in pursuing STEM courses.

A companion bill, [SF578](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

ELECTIONS

Everyone can vote absentee

Today’s fast-paced society full of multi-tasking individuals is the impetus for a bill that would allow any eligible voter to vote by absentee ballot. Approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 15, the bill now goes to the House State Government Finance Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom), [HF768](#) would remove current requirements to obtain an absentee ballot. These include illness, isolation or quarantine, disability, religious discipline, observance of a holiday and serving as an election judge.

Kalin said current voting requirements don’t reflect societal changes. While campaigning, he said he heard from constituents that the ability to vote should be made more convenient.

Also under the bill, voters who have difficulty getting to the polls because of health reasons, as well as residents of assisted living facilities, would be eligible for delivery of ballots via an



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Representing the Minnesota School Nutrition Association, Elaine Keefe shows the House K-12 Finance Division an example of the fresh broccoli that could be provided if school lunch aid were increased.

agent. Only people in health care facilities, participants in a residential program for adults and residents of shelters for battered women are now able to receive ballots by an agent.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have defined an agent as someone the voter previously knew, to avoid voters being persuaded by an agent to cast a ballot in a certain way.

Ongoing absentee voter status would be permitted, under the bill.

The current absentee process includes an additional application in order to receive the ballot each voting cycle. The time periods between the processes can easily be missed by those who have types of employment causing them to be gone for long periods of time, like an over-the-road truck driver, [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) said.

A companion bill, [SF208](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

EMPLOYMENT

Union notices in the workplace

It used to be that union notices could be posted on a break room bulletin board for all to see. Now employees can e-mail this information to necessary recipients.

Some employers have begun to put restrictions on the practice, however.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township), [HF611](#) would prohibit an employer from disciplining an employee because the person communicated with a labor or employee organization while on the work premises or through their work computer, even if it is in accordance with the policy and rules established by the employer and the collective bargaining agent.

Approved Feb. 16 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, and Feb. 20 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the bill next goes to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

We don't want to override any reasonable rules set forth by an employer or through labor negotiations, such as having to do this on an employee's break or during their lunch period, said Teresa Joppa, staff attorney for AFSCME Council 65. "This legislation concerns communications from one employee to another that concern union business or workplace issues."

Opponents said management needs to be able to regulate communication so employees are not abusing their work time, and that the bill would preempt federal labor relations law.

"If the state of Minnesota passes this law, it's going to be passing a law that makes Minnesota different from every other of the 49 states, and that is what is specifically not allowed by the Garmen doctrine and the many, many dozens of cases that have come up since," said Alec Beck, a labor lawyer with Seaton, Beck & Peters.

A companion bill, [SF539](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— M. COOK

ENERGY

Cut costs, get a bonus?

Have you ever thought of a way your office could save money by being more energy-efficient? What if coming up with a winning idea could net you a thousand bucks?

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) would do just that for state employees.

[HF295](#) would provide a financial incentive for state workers to suggest energy cost-cutting measures to their respective agencies. If an employee's idea works, they would get a bonus amounting to 50 percent of the money saved, up to \$1,000.

Welti said he got the idea from IBM, which has had a similar program in place for years — one that he said has saved the company thousands of dollars. He said the program wouldn't require any money from the state because it would pay for itself. In addition, Welti said employees could only take advantage of the program twice.

As an example of ideas that could be used, he cited an IBM employee who suggested that his company turn off all the lights in the soda vending machines in his building.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over Feb. 19 for possible inclusion into its omnibus bill. The companion, [SF1090](#), is sponsored by Sen. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington). It awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Geothermal heat pumps

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Bev Scalze](#) (DFL-Little Canada) aims to find out whether the secret to energy conservation lies buried in the ground.

[HF393](#) would provide \$50,000 for the Department of Commerce to conduct an assessment on the potential benefits of using geothermal heat pumps — a technology that utilizes the constant temperature of the earth

to help heat and cool buildings.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over Feb. 19 for possible inclusion in its omnibus energy finance bill. A companion, [SF474](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Also known as ground-source heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps use a series of tubes buried underground to circulate a water and antifreeze mixture that transfers heat between buildings and the earth. The bill would commission a study of the potential environmental and economic benefits of using the technology in both newly constructed and retrofitted residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

Bob Donely, sales supervisor for the geothermal heat pump manufacturer ECONAR, said that his growing industry has been around for several decades but is only just now becoming widely known.

"There are definite barriers to promoting this industry. It's a very small industry. ... Even the largest manufacturer in the U.S. employs about 300 employees," Donely said.

John Wayne Barker, executive director of Merrick Inc., a nonprofit that provides vocational opportunities to developmentally disabled adults, said that his organization retrofitted its building with a geothermal system and saw cost savings almost immediately. He supports the bill because it would provide businesses with a reliable set of data about the cost impacts of employing the technology.

— N. BUSSE

Renewable energy standard

Minnesota now has the most aggressive renewable energy standard in the United States, thanks to a new law sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul).

The law, signed Feb. 22 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, will gradually increase the percentage of the state's electricity that comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable sources to 25 percent by 2025. Xcel Energy, the state's biggest power company, faces a tougher requirement of 30 percent by 2020.

Peterson said the law will not only mandate cleaner energy production, but also serve as an economic engine for rural Minnesota by enticing wind turbine manufacturers to the state.

"Right now, Minnesota imports more electricity than any other state. We need to keep more of our money at home, with an industry that will bring jobs and economic

Signed
by
the
governor

benefits to rural areas,” Peterson said.

The law grants authority to the [Public Utilities Commission](#) to enforce compliance, and also directs power companies to consult with the commission on a plan to make the necessary modifications to the state’s electric transmission infrastructure. It also includes a provision for a flexible renewable energy credit system, whereby companies that cannot meet the standard can purchase credits from companies that exceed them.

During discussion on the House floor, Feb. 19, [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) called the bill a “compromise that most people can live with,” but also suggested that more emphasis should be placed in the future on energy conservation. He thanked Pawlenty for his “great leadership” in pushing for renewable energy.

[House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) praised the bill, and also offered assurances that it was “not the last you’ve heard on the issue of energy” from the House this session.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF4/SF4](#)*/CH3

—N. BUSSE

* Denotes the file submitted to the governor.

ENVIRONMENT

Great Lakes compact signed

Signed
by
the
governor

Minnesota is officially the first state to approve a Great Lakes water usage compact more than six years in the making.

A new law signed Feb. 20 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty ratifies the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a proposed agreement between eight states and two Canadian provinces that would prohibit diversions of water outside of the Great Lakes basins. Such diversions can have significant environmental and economic impacts.

The compact is the result of years of negotiations through the Council of Great Lakes Governors, a nonpartisan partnership between the eight Great Lakes states — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

To become effective, it must be signed into law by the governors of the seven other states, ratified by the U.S. Congress, and then agreed to by Canadian authorities.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the compact also establishes that the states and provinces involved would implement conservation and efficiency programs and

use consistent standards to evaluate the environmental and economic impacts of proposed uses of Great Lakes water.

Speaking on the House floor Feb. 1, Huntley noted that all of the restrictions placed on water usage by the compact would be less restrictive than what is currently in Minnesota law.

[HF110](#)*/[SF38](#)/CH2

—N. BUSSE

* Denotes the file submitted to the governor.

GAME & FISH

Deer for the hungry

A House division approved a bill that would add a \$1 surcharge to all deer hunting licenses to help hunters donate their deer to food assistance programs for the needy.

[HF278](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), was approved Feb. 19 by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division, and now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. A companion, [SF399](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Under the bill, proceeds from the surcharge would be collected by the Department of Natural Resources and diverted to the Department of Agriculture, which would then use the funds to reimburse processors who prepare donated deer for distribution to food banks.

Newell Searle, vice president of external relations for Second Harvest Heartland, said the bill would kill two birds with one stone: controlling the deer population and feeding the hungry.

“Meat is a product that is not donated in large quantities, typically, to food banks,” Searle said, adding that venison has a high nutritional value and is low in cholesterol.

Thomas Keliher, a lobbyist representing the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, said the association opposes the bill because of the mandatory \$1 fee, and that such a program would be better funded through General Fund appropriations or simply through private donations.

“If you choose to donate and help out with these situations, you should just go ahead and do so out of your own pocket,” Keliher said. He added that the association would support a “voluntary check-off” on deer license applications to donate money for the program.

Ed Boggess, deputy director of the DNR’s Fish and Wildlife Division, said the department had concerns that diverting license fees into other agencies might affect federal matching funds that are contingent on license fees being

used within the department. Hansen said he is willing to work on the bill’s language with the DNR.

— N. BUSSE

Animal noise callers

Hunters could be allowed to use radio-controlled animal noise callers to hunt certain animals.

[HF343](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder), was held over Feb. 19 by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division for possible inclusion into its omnibus bill. Its companion, [SF142](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Currently, Minnesota law does not allow hunters to use radio equipment to hunt game. The bill would create a specific exemption for hunters who use wireless remote-controlled callers to hunt foxes and coyotes.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) expressed concern that such devices might unintentionally lure domestic pets and other nongame animals into hunters’ sights.

“What about other things that will come? I mean, my beagle would run to that noise,” Wagenius said.

Cornish said that in his experience, hunters have no problem identifying and avoiding dogs and other unwanted animals that might run in after a decoy.

[Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), division chairman, clarified that similar devices controlled through a wire rather than radio-controlled are already legally used for such purposes.

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

An end to a department

The [Department of Employee Relations](#) would be eliminated, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 20.

Sponsored by [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), [HF1048](#) would abolish the department as of June 1, 2008, and transfer the duties to the Finance, Administration and Health departments.

The bill, which next goes to the House Finance Committee, is an attempt to consolidate resources in state government and has bipartisan support, Pelowski said.

“We do have complete support with most of the employee unions,” Commissioner Patricia Anderson said, indicating there wouldn’t be any job losses, but some job descriptions could change.

Pelowski successfully amended the bill to include union language for worker protection so that “no employee in the classified service shall suffer job loss, have a salary reduced, or have employment benefits reduced as a result of a reorganization mandated or recommended.”

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) said the added language doesn’t allow for reducing the size of government when jobs are not reduced.

“If you don’t take some small steps, it’s difficult to do,” Pelowski said. Sharing resources in the long run gets a much “bigger bang” for the tax dollar.

A companion bill, [SF887](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Google government

The public would be able to search state contracts via a Web site, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 20.

Sponsored by [Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie), [HF376](#) would require the state to maintain a searchable database with information on state contracts, including grants, which would provide how much has been appropriated and the source of the funds.

The proposal is an attempt to create more transparency in government, Paulsen said. There was no opposition to the bill, which next goes to the House Finance Committee.

Jim Rhodes, legislative director with the [Department of Administration](#), said some of the requirements in the bill carry a large price tag. Additionally, providing contract information going back 10 years for areas such as the [Department of Transportation](#) could be difficult.

Although the bill currently would require a 10-year history, Paulsen said he would work on changing some of the language so the Web site can be implemented more quickly.

Marcia Avner, public policy director for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, said the Web site would create a better understanding of where money is going.

A companion bill, [SF416](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Funding regional emergency services

Regional emergency medical services, which have been financially strangled by steady declines in seatbelt fine revenues since 2000, may finally get the boost they need.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), [HF688](#) requests \$800,000 for the Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board, which, in turn, would apply all monies across all eight EMS regions.

Moe told members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division Feb. 21 that funding would help update equipment, facilitate better coordination and public education, provide training, re-staff programs and ensure quality. The proposal is to be considered for the division’s omnibus bill.

Emergency medical services provide ambulance and emergency response, first responder and disaster response. A large portion of their funding is derived from seatbelt penalties, which, due to greater public compliance, have decreased by 15 percent over the past five years.

A companion bill, [SF637](#), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Tougher exams for X-ray operators

While testifying for her bill Feb. 19, [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) shared a health care experience.

“The first X-ray found nothing,” she said. They then went to a second hospital, where doctors misdiagnosed the problem. A visit to a third hospital yielded a correct diagnosis, but missed the severity. “And then (we) went to Rochester and found out it was really bad.”

Otremba was talking to members of the House Licensing Subcommittee about her husband, and said [HF645](#), which would modify examination requirements for anyone operating X-ray machines starting January 2008, might help ensure better consistency among those tests for others.

The bill attempts to standardize the skill level for all new professionals performing X-rays. It would require full-time operators to take a nationally-recognized exam and applies more stringent testing standards, which would be approved by the health commissioner, for limited X-ray operators.

The legislation also prohibits limited operators from performing certain diagnostic tests.

Advocates argue that the state’s current exams

do not evaluate enough facets of X-ray operation to ensure consistently good pictures.

“This test does not include anatomy or pathology; how to properly position the patient; or what exposure factors to use in order to obtain a diagnostic X-ray,” said Linda Coster, a radiologist.

The bill, which will be considered for the subcommittee’s omnibus bill, does not apply to current operators or those licensed to practice medicine, osteopathy, chiropractic, podiatry or dentistry and certified dental assistants.

A companion bill, [SF445](#), sponsored by [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Remembering with dignity

For years, state hospitals and institutions used makeshift numbered markers, in the form of wooden or iron stakes, concrete blocks or cement-filled coffee cans, as gravestones for patients who had died in care.

Earl Karsikas told the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division Feb. 21, that his grandfather, who spent years in a state institution in Hastings, was one such man.

“My grandfather was eventually forgotten by his family, and then he was forgotten by the state,” he said.

Sponsored by [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault), [HF760](#) would appropriate \$400,000 to Remembering With Dignity, a project attempting to remark these graves. It would be the third time in 10 years the effort would receive state money.

“We couldn’t do this without state funding,” said Jim Fassett-Carman, a project organizer. “And we feel strongly that the state is responsible.”

Fassett-Carman said there are, at a minimum, 12,740 unmarked or unnumbered graves of Minnesota state hospital residents. He estimated it would cost more than \$2 million to supply headstones with a name, birth date and date of death for the deceased.

Recipients must also “collaborate with community groups and state and local government agencies to build community involvement and public awareness, ensure public access to the graves, and ensure appropriate perpetual maintenance of state cemeteries.”

The bill was held over for consideration in the division’s omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF676](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

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

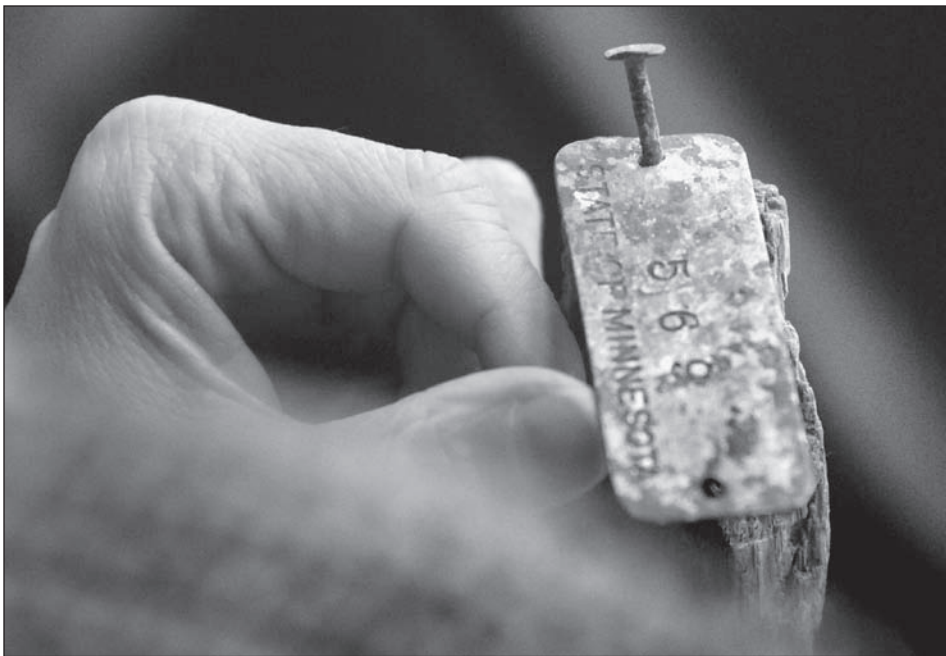


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Diane Loeffler examines an old grave marker, consisting of a number nailed to a wooden stake, passed around to members of the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division Feb. 21 during testimony on a bill that would provide funding for the Remembering With Dignity project.

— M. SIMPSON

Expanded insurance for young adults

People between the ages 18-25 are often least likely to be covered by medical insurance.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls), HF475 could be a boon for those young adults because it would grant them longer access to their parents' health plan.

The bill, approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 20 and sent to the House Commerce and Labor Committee, would amend, for the purposes of private health care coverage, the definition of dependents to include anyone under age 25. Under current law, family coverage extends only to full-time or disabled students under age 25 and unmarried teens younger than 19.

Loeffler argued the legislation was good public policy because it would help reduce the number of uninsured, promote continuity of care, offer options for students forced out of school due to disability or illness, and potentially reduce higher education costs in schools that mandate health care plans for students.

"I was quite amazed while door-knocking this past year how frequently this came up," [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) said. Many middle- and upper-middle class families in her district told her about gaps in coverage for children this age, many of whom were underemployed college graduates.

Other members worried that broadening access might inadvertently increase overall premium costs, or worse, some joked, keep young adults in the nest too long.

A companion bill, [SF816](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Helping those suffering mental illness

After 29 years of law enforcement, Sharon Lubinski, an assistant chief with the Minneapolis Police Department, reached a sobering conclusion.

"I think society, quite frankly, does not take good care of mentally-ill people," she said. "Then the police department becomes the safety net, and we are not a good safety net when it comes to mentally-ill people."

She was speaking to members of the House Mental Health Division about one aspect of [HF196](#), specifically an expansion of Crisis Intervention Team Programs, which train police officers to better respond to calls involving the mentally ill.

After two days of hearings, the bill, which seeks to affect nearly all facets of mental health services, was held over Feb. 16 for further discussion.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), the legislation would involve corrections by requiring assessments for certain defendants and segregated or confined inmates, as well as providing funds for specific reentry projects and discharge planning.

The bill would touch children and families by appropriating money to related collaborative services, suicide prevention

programs, foster care training and to grants for teen screen programs and mental health services, while increasing reimbursement rates for respite care and a variety of mental health care professionals.

It would also help recipients of government-sponsored health care by expanding coverage to more mental health services, increasing reimbursement rates for providers, eliminating co-pays and authorizing a study of the relationship between Minnesota Family Investment Program participants' employment success and children's mental health needs.

"This was meant to be an umbrella bill that did include everything anyone could think of in the mental health network...this was not to be the frugal bill," Greiling said.

No fiscal note was available for the bill.

A companion bill, [SF148](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Tuition fairness

At the [University of Minnesota](#), a Wisconsin student is paying less in tuition and in fees than his or her Minnesota counterpart.

[Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and a number of other legislators do not think this is fair.

Huntley sponsors [HF398](#), which was held over Feb. 21 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

It would change the reciprocity agreement between the two states so that Wisconsin students attending the university would pay the Minnesota resident tuition rate. The change would be phased in over two years beginning in the fall of 2007.

"The difference between what Wisconsin reciprocity students pay and Minnesota residents pay to attend one of our four campuses has simply grown to the point that it is ridiculous. It's not a situation we believe any other state would tolerate," said Peter Zetterberg, senior vice president of academic affairs in the university's Office of Institutional Research and Reporting.

Under the current reciprocity agreement, a student pays the tuition and fees of a comparable institution in their home state. Because Wisconsin's state resident rate is less expensive, a Wisconsin student could pay significantly less. For example, a Minnesotan

at the University of Minnesota-Duluth pays \$1,700 more than a student who resides across the harbor in Superior, Wis. At the Morris campus, the difference is \$2,700, Zetterberg said.

Agreements with North Dakota, South Dakota and Manitoba call for the student to pay the higher of the two in-state rates at a comparable campus.

Using a formula that includes instructional costs, the state with the greater net state obligation pays the other state the difference between the net state obligations.

Susan Heegaard, director of the [Office of Higher Education](#), said that they are attempting to renegotiate the reciprocity agreement with Wisconsin, and hope to have a response to a November offer yet this month.

A companion bill, [SF307](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Higher Education Budget and Policy Division.

— M. COOK

HUMANITIES

Indigenous Language Council

With fewer than 15 people in the state fluent in speaking Dakota, teachers say now is the time to save the language.

“We only have 10 years to save the language,” said Margaret Boyer, a member of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals. “Every week an elder dies.”

Sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield), [HF779](#) would establish the Minnesota Indigenous Language Act and the Council on Indigenous Language to help ensure the survival of American Indian culture and languages. The bill was approved Feb. 19 by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division and sent to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF586](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Boyer said children have to be immersed in the language for 11 years in order for it to stick with them for life. She added that these native languages are not like others. A person can travel to France, for example, and have total immersion to learn the language, but Minnesota is the home of Dakota and Ojibwe.

John Poupart, president of the American Indian Policy Center and member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Chippewa, said the stories, legends and spirituality of his tribe have been conveyed for generations through



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Liela Goggleye, left, and Betty Jane Schaaf testify before the Minnesota Heritage Finance Division on Feb. 19 in support of HF779, which would provide funding for Indigenous languages. Both women represent the Native American Leader Circle, a leadership project of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals.

the language and by word of mouth.

“All of the knowledge is contained by word of mouth,” he said. “Nothing was written. This is why we stay committed to our elders and the language.”

— S. HEGMAN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Protecting resorts

A bill approved by a House committee aims to protect resort owners from local ordinances that might prevent them from maintaining their buildings.

[HF849](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), was approved Feb. 20 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. The bill would allow resort

owners to perform maintenance on existing structures and replace damaged or destroyed structures as long as their establishments continued to operate as resorts.

Additionally, it would allow owners to “minimally” expand their building structures, when necessary, to bring them into compliance with federal, state or local buildings codes — provided that such expansions would not bring the structures any closer to a shoreline. It would also prevent a change in ownership of a resort from being construed by local governments as a conversion to a different use.

“We want to preempt local zoning,” said Joel Carlson, a lobbyist representing the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. “We need to have these tools to remain viable.”

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) said

he thinks the bill's definition of resort is "too loose" and that nonresort owners could abuse the bill's provisions for their own purposes.

Terry Neff, director of environmental services for Aitkin County, said he is concerned that the bill has no provisions allowing for nonconforming structures to be brought into compliance with local building codes.

The bill now goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, where Moe expects more of the details will be worked out in the bill.

A companion, [SF961](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

MILITARY

Education assistance

Two similar bills are competing to be part of a comprehensive program to provide education benefits to veterans. But one bill's sponsor cautions that the other bill's \$50 million price tag could, if included, doom to failure an omnibus veterans bill.

Known as the Minnesota GI Bill, [HF162](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), reflects the ideas of the Military Action Group, a consortium of veterans organizations that have been working on veterans-related legislation during the last few years. This proposal caught the attention of the governor and is funded at \$30 million in his budget proposal.

[Rep. Bernard Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), on the other hand, sponsors [HF533](#) — the Veterans' Tuition Assistance Act — a proposal the attorney general's office brought forward in December. Although Lieder's delete-all amendment brought his bill's language closer to Haws', its price tag is estimated at \$50 million.

Both bills were approved by the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 16, and sent to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division.

Under consideration is a \$1,000 tuition assistance program at any Minnesota post-secondary institution for veterans, and spouses and children of deceased or permanently disabled veterans. It is how the \$1,000 grant eligibility is calculated that differs.

"This is a mature bill, developed over the last two years," Haws said. "It is built to meet the total package, so that it works. I beg ... to bring these two bills together for a bill that serves the heroes that we want to serve."

"This (HF533) represents a compromise that was worked out in the Senate between the



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

With Rep. Dan Severson listening, Sally Jaranson of Bemidji gives emotional testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 16 in support of a bill that would establish a Minnesota GI Bill program to provide post-secondary education assistance to veterans.

governor's and attorney general's proposals," said Ben Wogsland, assistant director of communications and research for the attorney general's office.

Sally Jaranson of Bemidji said her son has been in the National Guard for over three years, and may not be eligible for any GI Bill benefits, under current federal regulations. "I am thankful that you people have taken the time to look out for these guys," she said.

The companion bills, [SF253](#) sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), and [SF408](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), have been referred, to the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

TAXES

Cosmetic taxes

Those wanting Botox injections could find the procedure subject to sales tax beginning in July.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1027](#) was held over by the House Taxes Committee Feb. 19 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

The bill would impose the state's general sales tax on cosmetic surgery, cosmetic

injections, various cosmetic laser treatments, hair transplants and cosmetic dentistry. The tax would not apply to reconstructive surgery or dentistry performed because of congenital defects, development abnormalities or other procedures to improve function or give a more normal appearance. The sales tax would likely create \$7.7 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$9.9 million by 2011.

"We have an eroding sales tax base because we're not taxing services," said [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), committee chairwoman.

New Jersey is the only state to impose a cosmetic tax so far, Kahn said. The language for her bill was taken from that law. Many members said the language needs to be clarified before it can move forward.

[Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) said the tax exemption section of the bill provides a loophole for the taxed services section of the bill.

"The 'more normal appearance' is in the eye of the beholder," he said. "What is a normal appearance? Who would decide it would improve appearance?"

Kahn said Botox and lip injections are not needed to provide what is considered a "normal appearance."

"It's like art," she said of necessary procedures. "You know it when you see it."

— S. HEGMAN

Local sales tax bumps

Local governments are generally prohibited from imposing sales taxes unless they receive authorization by the Legislature.

Representatives from North Mankato, Emily and Cloquet argued their case for a local sales tax to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 19. [HF108](#), [HF442](#) and [HF885](#), sponsored, respectively, by Reps. [Terry Morrow](#) (DFL-St. Peter), [Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), were referred to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation.

North Mankato Mayor Gary Zellner said the 0.5 percent sales tax would generate \$6 million for improvements to local highways, parks and public libraries, and continued riverfront development. Residents approved the sales tax in November 2006 general election.

Emily wants the 0.5 percent sales tax to pay for a wastewater system installed seven years ago. City Councilmember Kent Rees said that the nearly \$1.64 million to be raised would pay for the loan needed to complete the project. Residents also approved this increase in the last general election.

Voters in Cloquet have not yet considered a proposed 0.5 percent sales tax and \$20 per vehicle excise tax to fund various

capital projects and improvements. City Administrator Brian Fritsinger said that over the past six years, the loss of local government aid has hit his city hard, and this tax would relieve some of the pressure. Voter approval would be needed before the tax is imposed.

Companion bills to the Emily and Cloquet projects, [SF315](#) and [SF692](#), sponsored, respectively, by Sen. [Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji) and Sen. [Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), have been laid over by the Senate Taxes Committee for possible omnibus tax bill inclusion. A companion bill, [SF512](#), to the North Mankato bill is sponsored by Sen. [Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), and was laid over by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— C. GREEN

Lowering sales tax

Lowering the sales tax rate could have a big impact on the state's General Fund, and it could happen as soon as July.

Sponsored by [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), [HF149](#) was held over Feb. 20 by the House Taxes Committee for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. A companion bill, [SF240](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

The bill would reduce the general sales and use tax by 0.5 percent to 6 percent. The loss of revenue in fiscal year 2008 is estimated to be \$315.6 million. The bill would also reduce the motor vehicle sales tax to 6 percent, which would create an expected loss of \$35.3 million in fiscal year 2008.

DeLaForest said it's important to look at the sales tax rate to give part of the budget surplus back to state residents.

"This is an opportunity to return it in some form," he said.

[Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) said the Legislature needs to balance the budget this year, but didn't like the idea of \$679 million being cut from the General Fund for the upcoming biennium.

"We don't want to go backward," DeLaForest said. "There could be other areas of savings."

He added, however, that he does not want sales tax added to the "staples of life," like clothing.

— S. HEGMAN

Tax modifications

Making permanent tax system changes is a top goal of the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division. Representatives got the ball rolling Feb. 16.

Identical bills sponsored by Reps. [Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) and [Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), [HF3](#) and [HF157](#), would

modify provisions of the property tax system to provide relief to all residents of the state. These modifications would include: increasing county and city aid programs and indexing aid appropriations for inflation; increasing homestead and agricultural market value credits; reducing a number of school levies and indexing school aid formulas for changes in property values; expanding the homeowner and renter property tax refund programs; and expanding eligibility for the senior deferral program.

Each bill would take effect in fiscal year 2009 and provide \$63.7 million in property tax relief, and as much as \$156.3 million by fiscal year 2011 based on inflation.

Since 2002, property taxes across the state have increased by \$2.2 billion, a 48 percent increase, which equals about \$1,300 per family, Marquart said. School levies have increased \$814 million, an 80 percent increase. The bills contain provisions to restore local government aid, county program aid cuts and the market value homestead credits in hopes of creating more permanent property tax relief.

The bills were held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

A companion to Marquart's bill, [SF349](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. Morgan's bill does not have a Senate companion.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Funding concerns from Congress

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, travelers are likely to utilize a transportation system that is nowhere near as ultimate as it could be.

"The problem is the billions in under-investment every year," said [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing). "We need to get real money on the table. ... If we want to get past where we are at, we need real resources not funny money."

At the federal level, the state has its biggest transportation ally in years; but now it is up to the state.

"If Minnesota doesn't get busy, it will not be able to match the \$4.3 billion in federal highway trust fund monies available to Minnesota under the law," [U.S. Rep. James Oberstar](#) (D-Minn.), chair of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, told a joint meeting of the House Transportation Finance Division and Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division Feb. 20. No action was taken.

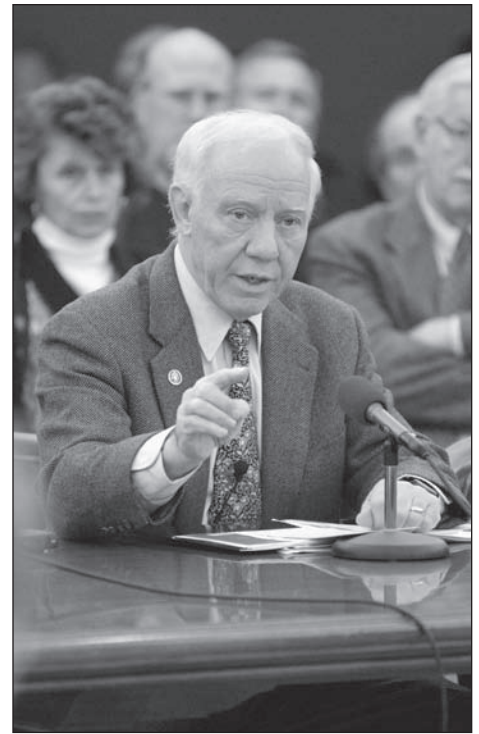


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, chair of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, shared his thoughts on state transportation funding at a Feb. 20 joint meeting of the House Transportation Finance Division and Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

The law he referred to is the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, better known as SAFETEA-LU, which authorizes transportation program funding for fiscal years 2005 through 2009. Under the act, Oberstar said, the state received a 46.1 percent funding increase over previous federal legislation.

Generally, the federal government pays 80 percent of a project's cost and the state covers 20 percent, under the law.

But, where would more state money come from?

Oberstar supported the amendment on last year's ballot to dedicate all funds from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax to transit funding, but said it is not enough.

"The last time we had a gas tax increase in Minnesota was 1988, and it was 3 cents," he said. Since then, the tax has remained the same, but miles traveled on state roadways have increased by 50 percent, to 56.9 billion miles.

By increasing the tax by a nickel per gallon, Oberstar said it would raise \$161 million for the state.

A bill that contained a 10-cent gas tax increase was vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty two years ago.

— M. COOK

Suburban rejuvenator

Morgan wants to take advantage of where the 'I's cross

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

Rep. Will Morgan (DFL-Burnsville) wants the area he represents to be the best place to work and raise a family. But as with other "aging" suburbs, it faces issues with its "aging" business centers, housing stock and population.



Rep. Will Morgan

As a House member, he sees his role as one of helping city and school leaders facilitate the goal of "rejuvenation" — revitalizing business areas, improving the transportation corridor and maintaining property values. Morgan said that Burnsville's strategic location within the Twin Cities metropolitan area makes it a desirable place to locate. Quoting Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth Kautz, and referring to the intersection of

Interstates 35E and 35W, he said, "It's where the 'I's cross. We are the first city south of the river. And as we plan for the future, we need to really take advantage of that, especially for business redevelopment."

But it is the people who make up any community, he said, and it takes more than a good location to attract and keep residents. It takes a diversified, well-maintained housing stock, a good transportation system and good schools.

Morgan is pleased with his committee and division assignments: House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, where he serves as vice chairman; and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health; K-12; and Transportation finance divisions.

"They really tie together. Good schools make sure that families have good home values; public health means kids are showing up ready to learn; transportation means

| DISTRICT 40A |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,882 |
| Largest city: Burnsville |
| Counties: Dakota and Scott |
| Top concerns: Property taxes, education, health care and transportation |

people can get to and from work easily. ... I just like the idea of working on the whole community, particularly in those areas," he said.

A physics and chemistry teacher at Burnsville High School since 1991, Morgan said quality education, along with retaining quality educators in the schools are obvious concerns. He has been active in his local teachers union, acting as chief negotiator for the last three contracts.

This was Morgan's second run for a House seat. "All my adult life I have been a public servant. This is an opportunity for me to serve the public in a different way."

An educator with passion

Swails continues her public service

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

Not many people can say they grew up just streets away from a former U.S. president, but **Rep. Marsha Swails** (DFL-Woodbury) can.



Rep. Marsha Swails

As a junior high school student in Independence, Mo. her school bus drove by Harry Truman's house every day. Looking out the left side window she would see him sitting at his desk in front of his picture window writing

or reading.

That accessibility left a lasting impression. "I never felt that public service was something odd to pursue," said Swails, who believes the greatest thing a person can do is serve others.

A teacher for 22 years, including as an

Advanced Placement English instructor since 1999, her political aspirations emerged when she attended her first district caucus during the 2004 elections. Surrounded by neighbors with similar political passions, she said they encouraged her to run for office. Swails didn't want to give up teaching so she spoke with several legislators who were also teachers. They convinced her it's possible to do both.

"All my life I've felt that serving others was what I should do ... I see this as an extension of that core value," said Swails, the 2004 Woodbury Chamber of Commerce Teacher of the Year.

After hours of door-knocking and meeting thousands of constituents, she defeated incumbent Rep. Karen Klinzing, also a teacher, by 2.3 percent of the vote.

Swails said the issues most important to her district include quality education for children, affordable health care and transportation.

| DISTRICT 56B |
|-------------------------|
| 2002 population: 36,683 |
| Largest city: Woodbury |
| County: Washington |
| Top concern: Education |

There are simple fixes for transportation, even if that means rescheduling a few bus routes. "They don't have to be multimillion dollar road projects or light-rail, but we can implement short-term solutions to make lives better," Swails said.

Her background as a teacher makes her well-suited for her seats on the House E-12 Education Committee and the K-12 Finance Division.

Her other committee assignments include Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, Labor and Consumer Protection Division, and she is vice chairwoman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Monday, February 19

HF1063-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Uniform Environmental Covenants Act adopted.

HF1064-Thao (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Human services disqualification set-asides modified relating to child and day care service licenses.

HF1065-Otremba (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Health screening benefit provided for eligible members of the armed forces and notification required.

HF1066-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Blood donor age minimum lowered to 15 with parental consent.

HF1067-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Mental health provisions modified, county board duties clarified, mental health service delivery reform provided, grants authorized, and medical assistance and MinnesotaCare coverage modified.

HF1068-Jaros (DFL)
Health & Human Services
St. Louis County group residential housing supplemental rates modified for a specified facility.

HF1069-Hornstein (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Hair transplant surgery facilities regulatory system established.

HF1070-Hilty (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence Act adopted providing public access to quality medical imaging procedures and radiation therapy procedures.

HF1071-Huntley (DFL)
Finance
Hearing aid and instrument loan bank established for infants and children who are deaf or who have a hearing loss.

HF1072-Liebling (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Mortuary science provisions modified.

HF1073-Hamilton (R)
Health & Human Services
Prescription drug removal from the formulary notice required.

HF1074-Ruud (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Darlene Luther Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act adopted.

HF1075-Anzelc (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Koochiching County nursing facility payment rates increased.

HF1076-Kahn (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Hospitals required to publicly report performance on prevention measures for hospital-acquired infections.

HF1077-Ruud (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Language interpreter services coverage required for health plan and medical assistance enrollees.

HF1078-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Hospital public interest review and alternative approval process modified, and hospital accountability requirements established for tax purposes.

HF1079-Clark (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Financial institutions prohibited from imposing a service charge to cash certain checks.

HF1080-Morgan (DFL)
E-12 Education
School district technology needs aid provided.

HF1081-Kalin (DFL)
Finance
Independent School District No. 138, North Branch, targeted all-day everyday kindergarten program established.

HF1082-Loeffler (DFL)
Finance
4-year-old kindergarten programs funding increased.

HF1083-Anzelc (DFL)
Finance
Maximum effort capital loan school district tax base modified to calculate debt service levies.

HF1084-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
Special education programs funding increased and restored.

HF1085-Howes (R)
Finance
Special education programs funding increased and restored.

HF1086-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
4-year-old students made eligible for extended time programs.

HF1087-Mullery (DFL)
E-12 Education
Teacher residency induction program provided supporting effective instruction for diverse student populations.

HF1088-Davnie (DFL)
E-12 Education
College in the schools program aid provided.

HF1089-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Child care quality improved and professional development of child care practitioners expanded.

HF1090-Dettmer (R)
E-12 Education
Alternative teacher pay system expanded to include additional staff development opportunities.

HF1091-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Supplemental education service providers approval rules modified.

HF1092-Anzelc (DFL)
E-12 Education
Online Learning Option Act modified.

HF1093-Hansen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Environment & Natural Resources trust fund provisions modified, Clean Water Legacy and trust fund expenditures provided, state lottery in lieu tax disposition modified, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1094-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Cellulosic ethanol producer payment program established.

HF1095-Morrow (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Vehicle weights allowed on highways modified and seasonal restrictions on gravel roads extended.

HF1096-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Bridges rental housing assistance funding provided.

HF1097-Davnie (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Dependent definition modified relating to group benefits for local government officers and employees.

HF1098-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Geothermal investment loans revolving fund established.

HF1099-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Lewis and Clark Rural Water System grants appropriations converted from the bonds proceeds fund to the General Fund.

HF1100-Hornstein (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Teachers retirement association refund repayment cost specified and return of any overpayments required.

HF1101-Faust (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Recreational camping regulations exception provided for county fairgrounds.

HF1102-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
Fond du Lac Technical and Community College land acquisition funding provided.

HF1103-Moe (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Bemidji local sales and use tax extended.

HF1104-Laine (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Rebate practices at retail establishments regulated.

HF1105-Laine (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Charter commission expense limitations increased for certain cities.

HF1106-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Virginia; B'nai Abraham Synagogue historical preservation funding provided.

HF1107-Bly (DFL)
Finance
Alternative livestock research and outreach funding provided to the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Minnesota.

HF1108-Gardner (DFL)
Taxes
Re-refined motor oils and recycled paper sales tax exemption provided.

HF1109-Thissen (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Evidentiary standards modified for post-conviction relief and scope of evidence retained expanded.

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|--|---|---|---|
| HF1110-Hilty (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Election definitions and procedures modified, complaint and resolution process established and penalties imposed. | HF1122-Howes (R) Environment & Natural Resources Crow Wing County tax-forfeited land sales authorized. | HF1136-Atkins (DFL) Commerce & Labor Congress requested, by resolution, to limit fees and expiration dates associated with gift cards issued by federal banks. | HF1149-Morrow (DFL) Finance Rural Policy and Development Center fund grant provided. |
| HF1111-Rukavina (DFL) Taxes Volunteer ambulance attendant and volunteer firefighter income tax credit provided. | HF1123-Bigham (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Driving record information disclosure to law enforcement required. | HF1137-Davnie (DFL) Finance Special School District No. 1, Minneapolis, bonding authority continued; and Independent School District No. 625, St. Paul, bonding authorization provided. | HF1150-Morrow (DFL) Finance Rural Policy and Development Center funding provided. |
| HF1112-Madore (DFL) Finance Transit fund established, metropolitan sales tax imposed and funds dedicated to transit, and motor vehicle sales tax revenues transferred. | HF1124-Loeffler (DFL) Finance Lowry Avenue Bridge funding provided. | HF1138-Masin (DFL) Taxes Legal reference and data center facility construction materials and equipment sales tax exemption provided. | HF1151-Swails (DFL) Finance Minnesota Learning Resource Center funding provided. |
| HF1113-Wollschlaeger (DFL) Taxes Property tax class rates increased on certain utility property. | HF1125-Dettmer (R) Taxes Class 4c property classification expanded to certain nonprofit community service-oriented organizations. | HF1139-Murphy, M. (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Minnesota State Retirement System administrative changes provided. | HF1152-Garofalo (R) Taxes Animal shelters pet sales exempted from sales tax. |
| HF1114-Ruud (DFL) Taxes Sales tax exemption provided for sales of tangible personal property to fire departments. | HF1126-Eken (DFL) Finance Red River mediation implementation funding provided. | HF1140-Faust (DFL) Finance County and district agricultural societies funding provided. | HF1153-Sertich (DFL) Finance Independent School District No. 698, Floodwood, fund transfer authorized. |
| HF1115-Norton (DFL) Taxes Local Government Aid distribution mechanism amended to decrease volatility. | HF1127-Moe (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources 4x4 truck trail development restricted. | HF1141-Emmer (R) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Hennepin and Wright counties change of boundaries by resolution authorized. | HF1154-Olin (DFL) Finance Minnesota Public Radio, Inc., and public educational radio stations funding provided. |
| HF1116-Dill (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Game and fish definitions, fees, license and stamp provisions, and possession and taking provisions modified; apprentice hunter validation provided; and criminal and civil penalties imposed. | HF1128-Moe (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources No net loss of forest land and hunting opportunities provided. | HF1142-Atkins (DFL) Finance Higher education state grant program modified. | HF1155-Madore (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Statewide self-advocacy network project established relating to intellectual and developmental disabilities. |
| HF1117-Simon (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Precinct caucuses moved from March to February, and state primary moved from September to June. | HF1129-Doty (DFL) Taxes Senior citizens property tax deferral program modified. | HF1143-Morrow (DFL) Finance Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board funding provided. | HF1156-Hilstrom (DFL) Taxes Vending machine products sales tax exemption provided for specified foods. |
| HF1118-Bigham (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Predatory offender registration database checks required for persons booked at jails. | HF1130-Nelson (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Police misconduct false reporting crime expanded. | HF1144-Atkins (DFL) Taxes Printing industry capital equipment sales tax exemption provided. | HF1157-Haws (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Minnesota "Support Our Troops" account fund uses expanded. |
| HF1119-Morrow (DFL) Finance Nicollet County road reconstruction funding provided. | HF1131-Moe (DFL) Finance Capacity building grants funding provided. | HF1145-Peterson, A. (DFL) Finance Geothermal energy incentives established. | HF1158-Lesch (DFL) Commerce & Labor One-week waiting period for eligibility for unemployment benefits eliminated. |
| HF1120-Sailer (DFL) Finance Independent School District No. 38, Red Lake, maximum effort capital loan provided. | HF1132-Atkins (DFL) Taxes Sale of amusement devices provided as a sale for resale. | HF1146-Murphy, M. (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice County jail reentry projects authorized. | HF1159-Hornstein (DFL) Transportation Finance Division Transportation Advisory Board membership modified, metropolitan area transportation evaluation provisions modified and special transportation service clarified. |
| HF1121-Morrow (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Emergency 911 data use permitted to notify the public of an emergency. | HF1133-Atkins (DFL) Taxes Sales and purchase definition clarified to exclude the making available of amusement devices. | HF1147-Sailer (DFL) Finance Independent School District No. 38, Red Lake, security improvements funding provided. | HF1160-Hilstrom (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Local governments and school districts post-employment benefits trusts authorized. |
| | HF1134-Doty (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Minnesota National Guard Non-appropriated Fund Instrumentality established. | HF1148-Thao (DFL) Finance Asian-American juvenile crime prevention grants provided. | |
| February 23, 2007 | HF1135-Pelowski (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Winona sales and use tax authorized. | | |

HF1161-Kohls (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority renamed the Scott County Community Development Agency.

HF1162-Morrow (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Single vehicle length limit increased.

HF1163-Kahn (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 adopted establishing public policy to protect employees and the general public from the known hazards of secondhand smoke, and requiring persons to refrain from smoking in certain areas.

HF1164-Westrom (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Plumbing plan review requirements modified.

HF1165-Hilstrom (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Purse set-aside and breeder's fund revenue sharing provided, and simulcasting and card club restrictions modified.

HF1166-Haws (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Motor vehicle hit-and-run petty misdemeanor imposed for certain offenses.

HF1167-Lillie (DFL)**Taxes**

North St. Paul tax increment financing district transfers authorized and time period to expend revenues extended.

HF1168-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Youth Program funding provided.

HF1169-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Child welfare provisions modified.

HF1170-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

Living-at-home/block nurse programs grant amounts increased and indexed, number of programs increased and grant administration funding provided.

HF1171-Davnie (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Labor and Industry Department data practices provisions modified.

HF1172-Wollschlaeger (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Revenue Department debt collection time limits, collection costs and referrals provisions modified.

HF1173-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Metropolitan Council labor relations data classified as nonpublic.

HF1174-Dominguez (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Minnesota reading corps program established.

HF1175-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Aircraft facilities state financing modified to allow flexibility in obtaining a new lessee for a facility.

HF1176-Clark (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Public school admission for students over age 21 allowed.

HF1177-Erickson (R)**E-12 Education**

School districts may voluntarily implement an integration plan (clarification).

HF1178-Lillie (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Driver's license endorsement required to operate three-wheeled motorcycle.

HF1179-Slocum (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Education commissioner directed to report summary data on student performance and other student information.

HF1180-Hausman (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Surviving spouse benefit eligibility specified from the Minneapolis Firefighters Relief Association.

HF1181-Kahn (DFL)**Finance**

Non-commercial television grants money appropriated.

HF1182-Loeffler (DFL)**Taxes**

Homestead property taxes limited for persons at least age 65 to a percentage of income under certain conditions.

HF1183-Loeffler (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Community forest management provided and forest and shade tree pest control provided.

HF1184-Peterson, S. (DFL)**E-12 Education**

New teachers induction program established.

HF1185-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

School districts and intermediate school districts building lease levy increased.

HF1186-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

Collaborative urban educator recruitment and training programs grants authorized.

HF1187-Laine (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Learning Resource Center money appropriated.

HF1188-Scalze (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Protection of ecological value and riparian rights in issuing aquatic farm licenses provided.

HF1189-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Licensed health care professional definition added and licensing provisions for physical therapists modified.

HF1190-Nelson (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Plumbing council established.

HF1191-Olson (R)**Finance**

Department of Transportation; property appraisal requirements amended.

HF1192-Eken (DFL)**Finance**

Small schools revenue created as a component of general education revenue.

HF1193-Sailer (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Beltrami County; Office of County Recorder appointment process provided.

HF1194-Hausman (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Coverage of glucose test strips without a prescription permitted.

HF1195-Mariani (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Teacher center required to provide a professional development program for teachers in science and mathematics.

HF1196-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Pre-kindergarten children with disabilities special instruction provided.

HF1197-Mariani (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education provided including general education, education excellence, special programs, technology, nutrition and accounting, libraries, early childhood education, self-sufficiency and lifelong learning.

HF1198-Mariani (DFL)**Finance**

Limited English proficiency programs five-year limit on funding removed.

HF1199-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

State involvement in trade policies provided and report required.

HF1200-Kranz (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Revisor's bill correcting erroneous, ambiguous and omitted text and obsolete references; and making technical corrections.

HF1201-Garofalo (R)**Transportation Finance Division**

I-35E speed limit designated in St. Paul.

HF1202-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Environment, natural resources and agriculture funding provided, revenue and fund disposition modified, food safety and defense task force established and NextGen energy provided.

HF1203-Poppe (DFL)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Bioscience institute facilities construction materials and equipment sales tax exemption provided.

HF1204-Davnie (DFL)**Taxes**

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

HF1205-Kranz (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Displaced residents relocation compensation required relating to manufactured homes.

HF1206-Kelliher (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Universal Newborn and Infant Hearing Screening Act adopted.

HF1207-McNamara (R)**Finance**

Red Wing juvenile corrections facility vocational education building funding provided.

HF1208-Mahoney (DFL)
Finance
State Building Code modified, and construction code and licensing provisions modified and recodified.

HF1209-Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Homeowners transactions regulated when homes are in foreclosure.

Thursday, February 22

HF1210-Dean (R)
Finance
Stillwater; Boomsite rest area restoration, reopening and maintenance required, and site transfer prohibited.

HF1211-Otremba (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Deer hunting; smokeless gunpowder prohibition during muzzle-loader season repealed.

HF1212-Mullery (DFL)
Taxes
Gift tax imposed and coordinated with the estate tax.

HF1213-Clark (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Drug free and prostitution free zones expanded and pilot project funding provided for Minneapolis and St. Paul.

HF1214-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
Rural wind development assistance program funding provided.

HF1215-Juhnke (DFL)
Taxes
Willmar wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1216-Simon (DFL)
Finance
Southwest transitway corridor draft environmental impact statement and preliminary engineering funding provided.

HF1217-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Road and bridge maintenance construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1218-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Trial by jury waiver court and prosecutor approval required.

HF1219-Juhnke (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Milk truck weight exemption sunset date repealed.

HF1220-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Child advocacy center grants provided.

HF1221-Kalin (DFL)
Finance
Energy savings activities required under the conservation investment program.

HF1222-Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Proposed property taxes and public truth in taxation hearings notices dates advanced.

HF1223-Hilty (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Elections; postsecondary institutions required to submit student residential housing lists, eligible proof of residence forms of identification expanded, and employee-list submission by residential facility operators eliminated.

HF1224-Hornstein (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
State funds use prohibited for encouraging or discouraging union organizing.

HF1225-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Limitation on actions modified for damages based on services or construction to improve real property.

HF1226-Mullery (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Automated teller machine applicants criminal background check required for applicants other than financial institutions.

HF1227-Morgan (DFL)
Finance
Burnsville Performing Arts Center funding provided.

HF1228-Dill (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Lake trout season modified within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

HF1229-Demmer (R)
Taxes
Installation charges excluded from the sales tax.

HF1230-Nelson (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Emergency 911 communication fees requirements modified.

HF1231-Marquart (DFL)
Finance
Special motor vehicle disabled American veteran license plates authorized.

HF1232-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Predatory offender law registration required for persons convicted of specified crimes of violence.

HF1233-Benson (DFL)
Finance
Foodshelf programs funding provided.

HF1234-Anderson, S. (R)
Taxes
Supplemental refund provided under the additional property tax refund program.

HF1235-Berns (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Zebra mussel control pilot program established.

HF1236-Berns (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Zebra mussel control pilot program established.

HF1237-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Criminal records expungement provisions modified.

HF1238-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Controlled Substance Reform Act of 2007 adopted authorizing deferral of judgment for certain drug offenses and making affirmative defenses available for driving while impaired offenses.

HF1239-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Sexual abuse against a minor; civil actions limitation period modified.

HF1240-Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Historic structure rehabilitation income tax credit provided.

HF1241-Thao (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Archery hunting provisions modified by permitting use of bow drawn, held or released by mechanical device.

HF1242-Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Board of Public Defense required to allocate and distribute funds based on weighted caseload.

HF1243-Bunn (DFL)
Finance
Big Marine Park Reserve improvements funding provided.

HF1244-Masin (DFL)
Finance
Motor vehicle sales tax proceeds apportionment provided.

HF1245-Eken (DFL)
Taxes
Volunteer ambulance personnel longevity awards income tax subtraction provided.

HF1246-Bigham (DFL)
Finance
Kids Voting Minnesota funding provided.

HF1247-Simpson (R)
Taxes
Resort expenditures sales tax refund provided.

HF1248-Tillberry (DFL)
Taxes
Commuter rail system construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1249-Atkins (DFL)
Taxes
Senior independent living personal technology income tax credit provided.

HF1250-Bunn (DFL)
Taxes
Telecommuting equipment income tax credit provided.

HF1251-Atkins (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Insurance actions; direct actions authorized and direct liability imposed on insurers in certain actions and actions regulated.

HF1252-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Finance
Deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind student transition services funding provided.

HF1253-Wollschlaeger (DFL)
Finance
Augsburg College; Step UP program funding provided to provide educational opportunities to chemically dependent students.

HF1254-Hosch (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Interim zoning ordinance notice and public hearings required.

HF1255-Nelson (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Workers' compensation; independent contractor status determination powers clarified and documents review required.

HF1256-Masin (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Bioscience business development and commercialization grants provided and report required.

HF1257-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Greater Minnesota business development public infrastructure grant program funding provided.

HF1258-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Federal tax conformity provided for individual income, corporate franchise, estate taxes, and property tax refunds; rates modified; technical corrections provided; and onetime subtraction provided for pollution control amortization.

HF1259-Kalin (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Absent voters procedures and requirements modified, emergency situations provided and study required.

HF1260-Severson (R)**Taxes**

Taxable market value increase prohibited for homesteads owned by persons at least 65 years of age and within certain income limits.

HF1261-Severson (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Board of Judicial Standards composition, powers and court rule provisions modified.

HF1262-Mahoney (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Joint physical custody presumption created, parenting plans required in certain cases and custody designations modified for parenting plans that use alternative terminology.

HF1263-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Anoka County forensic crime lab funding provided.

HF1264-Eastlund (R)**Taxes**

Early childhood education access grants contribution and early childhood educational expenses income tax credit authorized.

HF1265-Mullery (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Absentee ballot treatment provided following a vacancy in nomination because of death or catastrophic illness.

HF1266-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Corporate franchise taxation throwback sales rule provided.

HF1267-Morgan (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State employee technical and house-keeping changes provided.

HF1268-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

Paradise Center for the Arts funding provided.

HF1269-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Target Center city bonds principal repayment grant provided.

HF1270-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sex offender assessments expanded to include additional crimes.

HF1271-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Gift taxation provided for gifts made within three years of death.

HF1272-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Early childhood family education program funding increased, and minimum population guarantee used to calculate early childhood family education program revenue increased.

HF1273-Kranz (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sexual assault counselor testimonial confidentiality provided, "mistake of age" defense eliminated for certain criminal sexual assault offenders, and penalties enhanced for nonconsensual sexual contact committed by massage professionals.

HF1274-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Integrated search service inquiries authorized, drivers' license photographs use restricted relating to criminal justice, Public Safety Department enhanced officer safety provisions authorized and CriMNet Task Force membership clarified.

HF1275-Lesch (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul neighborhood circulators grant provided.

HF1276-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul; professional development funding provided to parks and library staff who interact with children and families.

HF1277-Mariani (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul; grant provided to notify citizens of youth services available in the community.

HF1278-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Homestead property provided relating to real property.

HF1279-Hornstein (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Transit police law enforcement agency jurisdiction clarified and transit police included in distribution of forfeited items.

HF1280-Hortman (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Diesel truck idling reduction device grants provided.

HF1281-Erickson (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Medical service personnel exempted from prohibition on use of head-phones while operating ambulance.

HF1282-Holberg (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Transportation Department data classified.

HF1283-Nelson (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Misrepresentation of employees as independent contractors prohibited and review of certifications of independent contractor status required.

HF1284-Mahoney (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State grants management provided by the commissioner of finance.

HF1285-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Indian child placement provisions modified.

HF1286-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Child maltreatment reporting provisions modified relating to American Indian children.

HF1287-Davnie (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Colorectal screening tests medical insurance coverage required.

HF1288-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

Day training and habilitation transportation rates modified.

HF1289-Heidgerken (R)**Finance**

Nursing home per diem reimbursements determination procedures modified.

HF1290-Slawik (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Child safety system and child safety fund established and reports required.

HF1291-Erickson (R)**Health & Human Services**

Specialized services contracts with nursing facilities authorized, short-stay resident reimbursement modified, facility operating payment rates increased, health impact fee portion dedicated and new case mix indices implemented.

HF1292-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child care finance provisions modified, and money appropriated.

HF1293-Mullery (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare eligibility requirements modified for persons with continuation coverage.

HF1294-Berns (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota Council on Disability sunset eliminated.

HF1295-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Chemically dependent person definition expanded to include tetrahydrocannabinol and alcohol use relating to pregnancy.

HF1296-Laine (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Doula services health insurance coverage required, medical assistance coverage provided and doula presence upon request added to the patient bill of rights.

HF1297-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities, community service providers and nursing facilities rate increase provided.

HF1298-Thissen (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund covered salary defined to include certain supplemental plan contributions.

HF1299-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Person required to be present in close attendance when dispensing fuel into a motor vehicle.

HF1300-Juhnke (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Fuel terminals weekly inventory reports required.

HF1301-Moe (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Residents right of first refusal established when a manufactured home park is being sold.

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| HF1302-Kalin (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Driver photographic record use provisions modified relating to law enforcement. | HF1312-Jaros (DFL) Taxes Affordable housing contributions income tax credit provided. | HF1321-Bunn (DFL) E-12 Education World languages provided as a required academic standard. | HF1329-Thissen (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Public Employee Retirement Association police and fire plan; Anoka County field investigator exempted from reemployed annuitant provisions. |
| HF1303-Welti (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Open meeting law; meetings by telephones or other electronic means authorized under certain conditions. | HF1313-Thissen (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Minneapolis Retirement Fund investment of assets with the State Board of Investment authorized and certain liquidity requirements modified. | HF1322-Berns (R) E-12 Education World language four-credit requirement established. | HF1330-Mullery (DFL) Commerce & Labor Airports; sale or other transfer of real property disclosure requirements repealed. |
| HF1304-Tingelstad (R) Finance Human trafficking; legal advocacy trafficking victims grant provided. | HF1314-Atkins (DFL) Commerce & Labor Truth in Music Advertising Act adopted regulating the advertising of live musical performances. | HF1323-Urdahl (R) Finance Special education program funding increased. | HF1331-Murphy, M. (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections Retirement coverage provisions modified and technical changes provided. |
| HF1305-Holberg (R) Public Safety & Civil Justice State and local law enforcement agencies required to provide data through integrated search service. | HF1315-Hamilton (R) Finance Minnesota Commission on New Americans established and appointments provided. | HF1324-Heidgerken (R) Finance Levy authority authorized for unfunded severance and retirement costs faced by school districts that have participated in the cooperative secondary facilities program. | HF1332-Clark (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections State Board of Investment divestment from certain investments relating to Sudan required. |
| HF1306-Holberg (R) Public Safety & Civil Justice Business screening agencies regulated. | HF1316-Hortman (DFL) Environment & Natural Resources Certain mercury-containing products sales prohibited; sales, use and disposal requirements modified; consumer information required; lamp recycling requirements modified; and mercury reduction at crematoriums provided. | HF1325-Peterson, S. (DFL) E-12 Education High five kindergarten program authorized. | HF1333-Dill (DFL) Taxes Emergency response vehicles and repair parts tax exemptions provided. |
| HF1307-Hilstrom (DFL) Finance Peace officer hirings and peace officer overtime funding provided to local governments. | HF1317-Hornstein (DFL) E-12 Education Elementary and secondary class sizes measuring and reporting provided. | HF1326-Hilstrom (DFL) Public Safety & Civil Justice Local Community Rail Security Act of 2007 adopted providing for protection of railroad property from terrorism and other criminal activities. | HF1334-Lesch (DFL) Commerce & Labor Health Families, Healthy Workplaces Act adopted establishing minimum standards of sick leave. |
| HF1308-Tingelstad (R) Finance Anoka County regional forensic crime laboratory funding provided. | HF1318-McFarlane (R) Finance Special education funding increased and two-year lag in base funding increased. | HF1327-Marquart (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Lake improvement districts requirements modified. | HF1335-Poppe (DFL) Commerce & Labor Consistent use of State Building Code's definition of a "story above grade" required. |
| HF1309-Hilstrom (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Political subdivision defined relating to state auditor. | HF1319-Tillberry (DFL) E-12 Education Regional center for the visual arts pilot program established. | HF1328-Peterson, S. (DFL) Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections St. Paul Teachers Retirement Fund Association purchase of service credit for uncredited prior teaching service in an early childhood family education position authorized. | HF1336-Mahoney (DFL) Commerce & Labor Council of High Pressure Piping Systems established and fees required. |
| HF1310-Atkins (DFL) Taxes Lawful gambling tax rates temporary reduction provided. | HF1320-Severson (R) Finance Statutory operating debt fund transfers for school districts authorized. | HF1337-Davnie (DFL) Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs Minneapolis street and street lighting construction funding authorized. | |

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MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH

MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Paying for post-secondary schooling

| | |
|---|---------|
| Number of public and private post-secondary institutions in the state | 178 |
| Estimated number of students at Minnesota colleges and universities | |
| in fall 2006..... | 326,244 |
| Percent increase over 2005..... | 1.8 |
| Percent increase over 2002..... | 6.6 |
| Number of undergraduates who received a state grant in 2005-06 school year | 71,100 |
| Total amount distributed, in millions..... | \$124 |
| Average state grant in fiscal year 2005, as approximate..... | \$1,700 |
| Approximate percent of 2005-06 awards that went to students whose | |
| annual family income was \$30,000 or less..... | 61.9 |
| Appropriation for state grants in governor's proposed budget for | |
| fiscal years 2008-09, in millions..... | \$304 |
| Students combining to receive \$18.1 million in state work-study dollars | |
| in 2005-06 school year..... | 10,700 |
| Account holders, as of July 2006, in the Minnesota College Savings Plan, a | |
| state-sponsored, plan that helps families save for college | 47,805 |
| Assets in the plan, in millions..... | \$442 |
| Percent increase in undergraduate tuition and fees at University of Minnesota- | |
| Twin Cities between 1997 and 2007, in current dollars | 112 |
| Percent increase at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities four-year | |
| state universities | 112 |
| Percent increase at MnSCU two-year community and technical colleges..... | 100 |
| Percent increase at private four-year schools..... | 73 |
| Percent increase in student borrowing between 2003 and 2005 | 22 |
| Millions borrowed by Minnesota undergraduates in 2005 | \$949 |
| Percent increase in amount borrowed by undergraduates from private lenders | |
| from 2003 to 2005 | 83 |
| Millions in Federal Pell Grants provided to Minnesota undergraduates in 2005..... | \$179 |
| Percent increase from 2003..... | 8 |
| Percent increase in financial aid for MnSCU students from 2003 to 2006..... | 26 |
| Percent increase in student loans..... | 39 |
| Percent increase in scholarships and grants..... | 7 |
| Percent increase for average state grant to MnSCU students from 2003 to 2006..... | 7 |
| Average amount borrowed in 2006 by a MnSCU student..... | \$5,117 |
| Percent increase from 2003..... | 15 |

— M. COOK

Sources: [Office of Higher Education](#), including [Highlights of Financial Aid Awarded 2005 and Preliminary Post-Secondary Enrollment Census for Fall 2006](#); [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#), including [Students and Graduate Borrowing and Financial Aid Trends, Feb. 2007](#); Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2008-09 biennial budget proposal.

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SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 9 • MARCH 2, 2007

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT
RECYCLING E-WASTE
PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICING

HF1338- HF1623

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: Tom Stillday, spiritual leader of the Red Lake Community, speaks in the Rotunda, during a Feb. 22 ceremony for the signing of an agreement between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the 11 state tribes.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

'Rules' of engagement

New majority, minority struggle to bridge the partisan divide

By Nick Busse

On Jan. 11, a little more than a week into the 2007 legislative session, the House passed its first bill — a noncontroversial federal tax conformity bill. At least, it was supposed to be noncontroversial.

Instead, what ensued was a three-hour tussle between House Republicans and the new DFL majority. The bill eventually passed 132-0, but not before numerous Republican-sponsored amendments were either ruled out of order or voted down along party lines.

"So starts the food fight," declared [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

The food fight continued — on a Great

Lakes water usage compact Feb. 1, an elections bill Feb. 13 and a renewable energy standards bill Feb. 19. During a Feb. 26 floor debate on the Permanent Rules of the House — the rules

of procedure that govern day-to-day business at the House — the food fight turned into an all-out partisan scrap.

After seven hours of debate and 29 amendments offered by Republicans (two of which were adopted), the rules had to be tabled so that the House Ways and Means Committee could board a waiting bus to attend a town hall meeting in Rochester. They were taken up again on March 1 on the floor and — after two more hours of debate on eight more amendments — finally adopted on a straight party-line vote.

Although the House rules are extremely important in that they lay the groundwork for all the legislation that is to follow, they also appear to be merely the latest bargaining chip in what is turning out to be a battle of wills between a Republican minority determined to assert itself and a DFL majority still struggling to find its footing.

During the Feb. 26 rules debate, exchanges between members grew heated on the issue of raising per diem — the daily expense allowance granted to legislators. The Senate recently

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Majority Leader Tony Sertich, left, listens to a question from Minority Leader Marty Seifert during debate on the House Rules, Feb. 26.

First Reading continued from page 3

raised its per diem to \$96 by way of a floor vote; the House raised its per diem to \$77, but did it by way of the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee rather than voting on the floor.

Several amendments were offered that would have forced a floor vote on the House's per diem increase. At one point, former House speaker [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) declared that an increase wouldn't have happened under Republican leadership, which prompted an ugly trip down memory lane.

Sertich reminded Sviggum that Republicans increased the per diem just two years ago, to which Sviggum replied testily, "Rep. Sertich, if you would want me to stand here

on the House floor and call out the names of the Democrats who came to my office and Rep. Paulsen's office whining, complaining, coercing and telling us that we should increase it, I'll start calling out the names. Rep. Sertich, I'd be glad to do it. You just let me know. Are you ready for it?"

While such scenes of partisan rancor are certainly not new to the House, they might well point to a long and difficult session ahead. Both Sertich and [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) admit that floor debates so far this session have drawn out longer than expected; however, neither one sees an easy way out of it.

Majority report

To be sure, this is not the first time the House rules have been a flashpoint of partisan controversy.

Often when there is a change in party control, the new ruling party tries to put its stamp on the rules, either to better suit its agenda or to improve the legislative process. When the Republicans took control in 1999, for example, they amended the rules by making a number of technical changes intended to streamline floor proceedings.

Even when no change in party control occurs, the rules are sometimes amended substantially. In 2000, for example, a heated debate erupted in the House Chamber over a proposal to do away with language in the rules requiring the House chaplain's prayer to be "nondenominational" and respect



"They have a right to talk. But if they're just trying to gum up the system, that is unfortunate. ... The people elected us in a bipartisan way looking for progress to be made, and you don't get there by just talking."

— House Majority Leader
Tony Sertich



"We're going to offer amendments to bills. The bottom line is, we're not going to just sit down and be little children at the little kids' table and not say anything. ... That's just not the way a representative democracy works."

— House Minority Leader
Marty Seifert

PHOTOS BY TOM OLMSCHIED

the "religious diversity of the House." (The language, which was added the previous year, was eliminated.)

Although the rules have always provided ample fodder for partisan quarreling, Sertich said this year's spat is different. He cites a larger pattern of long, difficult debates on the House floor — debates that he said have ended rather curiously with overwhelming bipartisan consensus.

"Every bill that has come to the floor — bills that have passed in a strong bipartisan way — have seemed to take many, many hours," he said.

What's the reason? Although hesitant to criticize a Republican minority that he says he would like to work with cooperatively, Sertich is frustrated enough to offer a theory.

"One avenue you can take as the minority is to try to gum up the system, and talk and try to stall things out. I'm hoping that's not what they're doing. I'm trying to take them at their word, but the trend is very alarming," Sertich said.

Sertich notes that Minnesota still has a Republican governor — one who he said has reacted with open arms to legislation that House Republicans have fought tooth and nail to amend on the floor.

"The governor has sent a letter or has openly discussed, 'This is the bill I want, and I'm looking forward to signing this bill.' Yet [House Republicans] go against their own governor and try to change it or do things against his wishes, too," he said.

Despite his disappointment, Sertich said that after spending six years in the minority, he understands how frustrating it can be, and refuses to try to stifle the Republicans in any way.

"They have a right to talk. But if they're just trying to gum up the system, that is unfortunate. ... The people elected us in a bipartisan way looking for progress to be made, and you don't get there by just talking."

Minority report

Seifert doesn't intend to be stifled. In fact, he intends to make sure his caucus's voice is heard loud and clear.

"We're going to offer amendments to bills," Seifert said. "The bottom line is, we're not going to just sit down and be little children at the little kids' table and not say anything

— be seen but not heard. That's just not the way a representative democracy works."

Seifert balked at the suggestion that he and his caucus is trying to hold up the process.

"There was not a concerted effort to gum up the works. ... That's just ludicrous," Seifert said, adding that the minority party has an obligation to offer its ideas and hold the majority party accountable.

In fact, some Republicans have said it's the Democrats who are failing to live up to their pledge of bipartisanship.

"I wonder if it's a new day here in the Legislature when the new majority is going to start rolling over the minority," [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) declared Jan. 11 after watching a series of Republican amendments to a tax bill ruled out of order.

Seifert doesn't go that far, but he does point out that Democrats behaved similarly when they were in the minority.

"When we were marking the tax bill up last year, there were 72 amendments offered in the tax committee. So they can't come to me and say, 'Oh, well, we never did this.'" 🐼

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Feb. 22-March 1 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

BIOSCIENCE

Cellulosic biofuel incentives

A bill approved by a House committee seeks to help establish locally owned biofuel and bioenergy production facilities by providing financial incentives to producers.

[HF589](#), sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton), would provide subsidies to producers of cellulosic biofuels that utilize perennial native crops to produce ethanol. The bill was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee Feb. 27 and now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The bill would establish numerous programs to provide loans and incentive payments to producers who develop renewable alternatives to fossil fuels. Peterson said the goal is partially to establish energy independence for Minnesota.

"In Minnesota, we don't have any oil, we don't have any natural gas and we don't have any coal — but we do have lots of corn, soybeans, biomass, wind and livestock methane," Peterson said.

David Morris, vice president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, said the bill would initiate the state's first step into what he called the "carbohydrate economy."

"We're in the process of shifting our raw material base from nonrenewables to renewables ... and we're going to continue increasingly to choose vegetables over minerals — biology over geology," Morris said. He added that the bill would create jobs, tax revenues and intellectual property that would benefit the state's economy.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) expressed concern that too much emphasis is being placed on isolating Minnesota's energy economy from other states.

"We don't have any coal or oil here. Is that necessarily an evil thing? I don't think so. But we continually have this raised as a reason we should be doing something here," Beard said.

A companion, [SF480](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— N. BUSSE

BUDGET

Forecast basically unchanged

The much anticipated [February Economic Forecast](#) was a letdown for people hoping to find more money for various programs.

However, as a whole, the forecast, released Feb. 28, still provides Minnesota lawmakers with a \$2.16 billion surplus to work with.

The budget balance for the next biennium shows a projected \$1.15 billion surplus, \$7 million less than projected three months earlier. The projected surplus at the end of the current biennium, June 30, 2007, is \$1.01 billion, a \$25 million reduction from the [November Economic Forecast](#).

"I don't think we're at the stage where we can expect surplus after surplus, so we need to be careful where we budget for future expenses in the out years," said Finance Commissioner Tom Hanson. He warned that about \$1 billion in inflation costs are not accounted for in the projection.

"We shouldn't expect revenue changes this small into the future depending on what the economy does," State Economist Tom Stinson said. He noted the recent stock market drop and the release by the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#) of the revised fourth quarter real gross domestic product report, which showed that the American economy grew slower than expected.

"If you look at inflation, the money available to us is modest," said [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls). "The economy underneath is not as robust as we had hoped."

The new projection will be used by lawmakers to establish a state budget for July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2009.

Kelliher said the numbers do not change the focus of her caucus. "Education, health care and reducing property taxes are what we'll continue to work on in the weeks ahead." She plans to help pay for these priorities by potentially closing corporate tax loopholes and better tax compliance.

However, the majority may not get all that it wants this session — all-day kindergarten and more early childhood programming, for example. "I'm afraid school advocates are going to be disappointed with this," said [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), who chairs the House K-12 Finance Division. "I'd been asking them to pray for a good forecast."

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) isn't so sure that DFLers will be able to provide the property tax relief they've

been promoting because of too many special interests.

"With Democrats in charge, the chance for relief is precipitously falling," he said. "Property tax relief and reform will be minimal at best."

— M. COOK

CONSUMERS

Prescription drug pricing

People struggling to pay medical prescriptions could benefit from a bill that would require pharmacies in larger cities to sell prescription drugs within 10 percent of the lowest price of each other.

Buying prescription drugs at a reduced rate significantly helps those who struggle to make ends meet, Kim Crockett told the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 22. A diabetic, Crockett said that some months she can't afford to purchase all her medications, so she tries to get by with only a few.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF282](#) would provide an exemption in predatory pricing laws for two or more competitors that price a pharmaceutical product within 10 percent of the lowest prices charged by each of these competitors, even if one or more of the prices is below cost. The measure would only apply to cities with a population of at least 50,000.

The approved bill now goes to the House Health and Human Services Committee.

Rural customers would be forced to drive into metropolitan areas to purchase drugs at lower costs, [Rep. Dean Simpson](#) (R-Perham) said.

"The greatest challenge to the small pharmacies now isn't going to be this legislation. It's probably the Internet and mail order," Atkins said.

The bill protects certain businesses and doesn't allow pharmacists to help patients with drug therapy if they are going to various locations, said Julie Johnson, executive vice president of the Minnesota Pharmacists Association. Pharmacists can't examine drugs being taken to make sure they are safe together if patients are purchasing them in different locations, she said.

Atkins countered that those issues exist now, with the costs varying widely and people shopping around. Those shopping around should take and show those prescriptions to their local pharmacist, he said.

A companion bill, [SF1233](#), sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St.

Paul), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Penalties for predators

Anyone convicted of using the Internet to solicit a child to engage in sexual conduct could face up to three years in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF503](#) proposes to expand the statute criminalizing the solicitation of anyone age 15 or younger. Approved by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 27, the bill's next stop is the House Finance Committee.

Currently, Minnesota law prohibits anyone 18 and over from sexually soliciting a minor, but does not make it illegal to engage in sexually explicit communication dealing with sexual contact or performance.

Assistant Attorney General David Voigt said the Internet provides such easy access to children that there is a desperate need for this legislation. Before any contact takes place, there can be "grooming" of the child for further specific sexual solicitation, Voigt said.

Craig Martin, a detective with the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, spoke about a convicted sex offender in Minnesota who began having sexually explicit communication with a minor in Illinois. This happens quite frequently, he said, but under current law, there is no way to prosecute the offender.

The bill allows for a conviction whether the communication originated or was received within the state.

A companion bill, [SF643](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

After school funding

In 2003, before, after and summer school programs serving at-risk youth lost their state funding.

The programs are designed to increase school connectedness, academic achievement in one or more core academic areas and help attendees become a more productive adult, according to the bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), [HF976](#) would appropriate \$10 million in fiscal year 2008 for after-school learning grants. The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill Feb. 27 and

referred it to the House Finance Committee.

"We're looking at a program that does a lot of good in the community," Slawik said. "It helps kids in terms of academic work after school and keeps kids in good constructive programs."

[Department of Education](#) findings point out that with these programs, 82 percent of attendees increased their technology skills, 76 percent report increased academic achievement, 74 percent were involved in community service, 47 percent improved their school attendance and there was a 38 percent decrease in juvenile crime.

"Young people have over 2,000 hours of discretionary time on their hands, which equates to a full-time job," said Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn, executive director of the Youth Community Connections. "They have more time not in school than in school. ... In the past five years, we have seen a 60 percent increase of 10-12 year olds going home alone."

In 2003, more than \$11 million in grants for these programs were cut from the budget. The cuts came, in part, because programs for youth attending schools in high poverty areas could receive funding through the federal "No Child Left Behind Act." The department anticipates that \$5 million would be available in future years.

A companion bill, [SF1223](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), was scheduled to be heard Feb. 28 by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Interactive learning

Technology similar to a telestrator used during football broadcasts could end up in more Minnesota classrooms.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Benson](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), [HF803](#) would make a one-time \$10 million appropriation in fiscal year 2008 for school site grants to demonstrate the educational advantages of the interactive white board. The bill was laid over Feb. 27 by the House K-12 Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

"The interactive whiteboard is a quantum leap over the old blackboard, overhead projectors and the whiteboard," Benson said.

The cost for each whiteboard system is approximately \$4,200. The grant could supply each of the state's 323 school districts with seven boards. A teacher would need about four hours of training to learn to use the device.

Kim Hoehne, a Minnetonka High School physics teacher, has one in her classroom. "It has a gazillion different tools," she said. As an example, Hoehne showed the committee how she could solve a physics problem with a

video clip off the Internet of a person on a dirt bike jumping off a ramp and crashing into a parked van.

The interactive whiteboard typically has a 10-year life span, and, at this time, the software upgrades are free. Janet Swiecichowski, communications director of the Minnetonka School District, demonstrated the strength of the board by hitting it. "One of our concerns was if we put them in the elementary classroom would they last. They can take a beating," she said.

A companion bill, [SF616](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), is scheduled to be heard March 7 by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Comprehensive school reform funding

A three-year federal grant has been terminated in its last year, sending some public schools in high poverty areas across the state scrambling to make up the difference in their budgets.

[HF975](#), sponsored by [Rep. Lyle Koenen](#) (DFL-Clara City), would make a one-time appropriation of \$2.1 million for fiscal year 2008 to the General Fund for grants to school districts that had received a portion of the \$3.36 million Comprehensive School Reform grant, which had been awarded to qualifying state schools.

The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over Feb. 27 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

CSR was a federally funded program designed to provide financial incentives almost exclusively to high-poverty, Title I-eligible schools that need to improve achievement scores, according to the [Department of Education](#).

"CSR is a systematic approach to improvement that focuses on reorganizing and revitalizing entire schools," said Dwayne Strand, superintendent of the Yellow Medicine East School District. "It uses scientifically based comprehensive models of school wide change that are supported by expert trainers and facilitators."

To qualify for funding, a program must follow 11 components in the Title I legislation, including schools must provide ongoing high-quality professional development for teachers and staff include measurable goals and benchmarks for student achievement; and maintain faculty, administrative and staff support.

A companion bill, [SF202](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Stacy Hinz proudly sits by her daughter, Jordan, as she reads a story to the House K-12 Finance Division Feb. 27. Hinz, principal of two Yellow Medicine East elementary schools, testified in support of a bill for comprehensive school reform funding to replace reduced federal funds.

Working together

A bill to improve communication between early childhood centers, parents and schools was approved Feb. 27 by the House E-12 Education Committee and referred to the House Finance Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope), [HF302](#) would allow school districts to be eligible for a grant program to establish early childhood community hubs that promote coordination of high-quality early care programs and schools.

Some legislators feel that the proposed funding is directed at the wrong group of children, however.

Middle and high school per pupil funding is greater than for younger learners, but test scores show that we're having problems at those levels, said [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake). "Why are we not funding these groups instead?"

"We ought to be funding all of them; however, I am convinced that if we haven't done a good job with our pre-school and grades through third we will have children with a deficit that they will carry with them throughout their school years," Peterson said. All of the research shows that if we don't put our money in the early years, we're missing an important component of success in later years."

The \$5 million for fiscal year 2008 and also 2009 would provide funding for early childhood community hub planning and implementation grants, and pre-kindergarten through grade 3 program grants.

A companion bill, [SF274](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), has been held over by the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HARDING

EMPLOYMENT

Ensuring meatpacker safety

Some meatpacking workers work in dangerous and unhealthy conditions.

They use sharp tools on product as it moves at a rapid pace along a slaughter line, which can cause repetitive motion injuries, as well as strains and sprains, according to people — including union representatives and workers — speaking Feb. 23 before the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division. Sometimes buildings are extremely hot or extremely cold, a break or meal room is not available, and sometimes workers are not permitted bathroom breaks and must wear diapers during their shift.

[Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul) is sponsoring [HF643](#) to help meatpackers by setting forth a bill of rights and creating an ombudsman in the [Department of Labor and Industry](#).

Approved by the division, the bill now heads to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Minnesota has approximately 320 meatpacking plants and 16,000 workers, the majority of which are immigrants. The bill would affect only those businesses with 25 or more employees.

The bill of rights would state that employees have access to adequate facilities and equipment. In addition, basic job information, such as duties, hours and wages must be provided to employees in the employee's

native language.

An ombudsman would inspect and review state meatpacking operations to ensure workers have, among other things, the right to unionize, the opportunity to use adequate facilities and the right to be free from discrimination.

Hansen said the bill is modeled after legislation enacted in Nebraska. According to its 2005 annual report, that program resulted in "a 39 percent reduction in total recordable injury and illness resulting in restricted work, and cases requiring medical treatment."

Dave Dederichs, manager of fiscal and labor/management policy with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, said the bill is unnecessary because state and federal laws cover many provisions in the bill, and the bill contains ambiguities that could lead to "discretionary interpretation."

A companion bill, [SF879](#), sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— M. COOK

ENVIRONMENT

Recycling e-waste

When the state banned the dumping of old TVs and other electronic devices into the municipal solid waste stream in July 2006, it left consumers with limited options for recycling them.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Fardo Haji, left, and Abdi Omar of Faribault testify Feb. 23 before the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division in favor of a bill that would establish a meatpacking industry workers bill of rights. Haji works at Jennie-O and Omar is an organizer for United Food and Commercial Workers.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Karen Budick holds Tempest, an American Bald Eagle, in the Rotunda as part of "Zoo Day at the State Capitol." Tempest and other animals from the Minnesota Zoo visited Feb. 27 to thank legislators for their support, introduce them to animals that educate Minnesotans about the environment, and talk to them about the zoo's new master plan.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids) aims to change that.

Sailer sponsors [HF854](#), which would establish a statewide system to collect and recycle "e-waste" — unwanted electronics devices like computers and TVs, which often contain materials that are harmful to the environment. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill Feb. 22. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

The bill would force manufacturers to collect and recycle an amount of consumer electronics equal to the weight they sold during the previous year — except in the first

year of the program, when the requirement would be 80 percent of the weight sold. Additionally, electronics collected outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area would count for 1.5 times their actual weight.

Victoria Reinhardt, environment and natural resources chairwoman of the Association of Minnesota Counties, said that local governments have had to pick up the tab both for recycling and for dealing with illegal dumping, leading to higher property taxes in some cases.

Laura Bishop, director of government relations for Best Buy Co. Inc., said the company supports the bill because it

emphasizes a "manufacturer responsibility" approach to recycling e-waste that will encourage more environmentally friendly products as well as allow the marketplace to absorb the cost of recycling.

"If you incorporate [the cost of recycling] into the cost of the product, that's the only way, ultimately, that you can bring that price down," Bishop said.

Heather Bowman, a business policy analyst with Hewlett-Packard, called the goals set forth in the bill "incredibly, aggressively high," and warned that consumers are unlikely to recycle an amount of products sufficient for manufacturers to fulfill them.

Although the bill received bipartisan support from committee members, at least one dissented. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) called it a "manufacturers' punishment bill" and warned that consumers would "revolt" over increased electronics prices brought on by recycling costs.

A companion, [SF235](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

LCCMR bill passed

A bill passed 121-6 by the House Feb. 26 would appropriate more than \$23 million from the state's environmental trust funds for 32 different projects relating to land, water and air protection.

[HF293](#), sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover), represents the recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#). Received by the Senate the same day, it has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee. [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is the Senate sponsor.

The purpose of the LCCMR, formerly the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR), is to make recommendations to the Legislature on how to use money from the state's environmental trust funds — primarily, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives its money mostly from lottery proceeds.

"LCCMR funding is kind of the research and development branch of state government as it relates to environmental funding," Tingelstad said. "There's a lot of innovation in this package, a lot of opportunity to do land and water protection."

Briefly summarized, the bill includes:

- \$12.3 million for land acquisition, for an estimated total of 17,000 acres, to protect forests, wetlands and other natural habitats;
- \$4.1 million for biological surveys and data collection of natural resources;

- \$2.9 million for various research projects;
- \$2.5 million for land restoration, for an estimated total of 4,000 acres, including vegetation restoration and research into biological controls for invasive species; and
- \$1.3 million for administrative costs.

The LCCMR's current recommendations apply to fiscal year 2008; a second set of recommendations will be presented for fiscal year 2009.

[Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings) took the opportunity to point out that the majority of lottery proceeds go into the state's General Fund instead of the environmental trust fund, where he said they belong.

"As we see on TV, they always advertise about the loon and the great things that the lottery money is doing for the environment. ... It's important to know that actually twice as much money goes into the General Fund as goes into the trust account."

— N. BUSSE

Banning toxic chemicals

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) would ban a series of fire retardant chemicals commonly used in such household items as plastic television enclosures, cables and some textiles.

[HF934](#) would prohibit the manufacture and sale of products containing polybrominated diphenyl ethers. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee took testimony on the bill Feb. 27 and laid it over for further consideration.

Clark said PBDEs are widely used as flame retardants and have been linked to developmental disabilities in children, and that safer alternatives are available. The bill would gradually phase out three types of PBDEs: Penta-BDE, Octa-BDE and Deca-BDE.

Kathleen Schuler, an environmental health scientist with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, said that although the first two chemicals are no longer being manufactured, Deca-BDE is still widely used. She said that although it is considered safer than the other two chemicals, Deca-BDE has been proven to degrade into more toxic compounds.

Beth Fondell, a member of Arc Greater Twin Cities, testified that research was becoming "increasingly compelling" that a recent rise in the number of children diagnosed with developmental disorders is directly related to an increased use of toxic chemicals.

Laura Ruiz, representing the Bromine Science and Environmental Forum, said alternatives to Deca-BDE are potentially worse than the chemical itself, and that health concerns related to Deca-BDE should be balanced with the potential risk of fires that might result from

banning the chemical. She also took issue with the notion that the chemical could break down in a natural environment, arguing that it had only been proven to break down in controlled lab experiments.

Steve Maki, vice president of technology at RTP Company, said Deca-BDE is typically encapsulated in other materials and has no chance of leaking out by the time consumers get it. He said any Deca-BDE present in the environment is most likely the result of poor handling of the raw chemical.

A companion bill, [SF651](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

GAME & FISH

Fishing with two lines

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) would allow anglers to fish with two lines simultaneously, but the Department of Natural Resources is less than enthusiastic about the idea.

[HF191](#) would amend state statute to allow fisherman the use of two lines instead of just one. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division laid the bill over Feb. 26 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion, [SF972](#), sponsored by [Sen. Pat Parisseau](#) (R-Farmington), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Jim Kalkofen, executive director of the In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail, testified in favor of the bill, arguing that using two lines wouldn't affect fish population numbers because of limits already in place on the amount of fish one person can catch.

"Fish populations can be governed by laws that limit when people can fish and how many fish they can keep each day, and how many they can possess," he said.

[Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) thinks that is a moot point.

"We don't want everybody to catch their limit of fish," Cornish said. "That seems like a funny statement to make, but if they did, we wouldn't have any fish in the lake."

Ron Payer, section chief for DNR Fisheries Management, agreed with Cornish.

"It's pretty clear that more fish will be caught with two lines," Payer said, adding that catching more fish would result in lower-quality fish populations with smaller fish.

Bob Meier, assistant commissioner of the DNR, offered an alternative solution for people who would like to fish with two lines.

"The best way if you want to fish with two lines is just to take a kid fishing with you," Meier said.

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

Low bid or best value contracts

A bill approved by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 28 would allow municipalities to award projects to vendors offering the best value as well as the best price. It now goes to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF571](#) would eliminate the sole requirement of awards going to the lowest bid, and include consideration of the quality of vendor's previous projects, the level of customer service, timeliness and the ability to assess and minimize risks.

Representing the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council, Richard Miller said that although the lowest bid is the current standard for government projects, this legislation would provide the best value for the state, consumers and contractors.

Gary Thaden, representing mechanical and electrical contractors, said that even though he agrees with the intent of the bill, the language is too broad. He also acknowledged a need for making good state and local construction contracts. Government has a higher standard, Thaden said, because it's the public's money.

A companion bill, [SF1278](#), sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— C. GREEN

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Birth defect data collection

The Birth Defects Information System was enacted in 2004 to track incidences of birth defects in Minnesota, refer affected families to services, stimulate research and inform the public of risk factors and prevention efforts.

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsors [HF906](#) to provide \$1.5 million in state funding for the system, which has operated on a limited basis through grants from the [Centers for Disease Control](#). The House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division approved the bill Feb. 27 and sent it to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, after approving an amendment offered by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), the division chairwoman, which would establish

an additional information system to track families with possible toxic exposure.

The issue of privacy dominated discussion, with several members expressing concern about the consent process used to collect data.

When a child is born with a birth defect, hospitals currently notify the [Department of Health](#), which sends the family a packet of information that includes a form to “opt-out” of the system.

“If we want to do this right, let’s use the informed consent that the law asks us to use,” [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti) said. “To me, we’re jumping over some big hurdles here.”

Proponents acknowledged the concern as ongoing in public health research, but said the process they use has overcome legal scrutiny.

“I think the questions you raise are at the core of what’s going on in health care,” said Phil Griffin, a lobbyist for the March of Dimes. “We do have a number of public health laws that tend to jump over this issue of informed consent, and they relate to major public health issues.”

A companion bill, [SF772](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), was heard March 1 by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division and laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

— M. SIMPSON

Home visits for families

A plan to modify current law and appropriations to provide visiting services to parents of newborns and young-at-risk children turned into a discussion about privacy, efficacy, research and even constitutionality.

Ultimately approved Feb. 22 by the House Health and Human Services Committee, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

The bill originally sought to provide two universal, voluntary visiting services: one for parents of newborns, and the other to parents of young at-risk children. Sponsor of [HF595](#), [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights), successfully amended it to remove the newborn program.

Laine said the remaining provisions would update current practices by requiring more training, collaboration and evaluation for providers of home visiting services, which she described as voluntary counsel, referral and information for parents who may lack the knowledge and experience to care for their young children. No appropriations were specified.

“Many, many families know how to interact with the child, and provide the safety, the nutrition, the care, the interaction, the language

development just naturally,” she said. “But there are many families, many young mothers, who do not know how to do this.”

Supporters argued that without early quality care, children could suffer lasting consequences.

“Once that baby is born, it’s experience that informs the brain,” said Dr. Terrie Rose associate director of the Irving B. Harris Training Center for Infant and Toddler Development at the University of Minnesota. “Home visiting has the opportunity to help

these parents ... so they know how to create a nurturing environment.”

Opponents call home visits potentially intrusive and, by and large, ineffective in the long term. Testifiers also said home visiting practitioners don’t typically disclose their role as mandatory reporters of child abuse, or the extensive data collection and sharing of information that may occur.

“Do the families know that assessments are being made on them?” asked Twila Brase, president of the Citizens’ Council on Health

SEEKING COMFORT



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Hundreds of women’s advocates and supporters gather in the Rotunda for the 2007 Violence Against Women Action Day Rally Feb. 28 at the Capitol. One of their goals is to bring attention to the work that needs to be done to end domestic violence and sexual assault. Jan Egge of Grove City is comforted by Judy Revier a victims advocate for the Renville County Shelter House. Egge’s sister, Kerri Marie Robinson, was killed by her boyfriend in January 2006.

Care. “Do they know that a record is being created on them? I am guessing that they do not.”

A companion bill, [SF434](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

A big boost for hospitals

When the Legislature faced a \$4.5 billion deficit in 2003, Minnesota’s hospitals took a big hit in health care reimbursements. The same happened in 2005. The total tally, say advocates, is \$293.2 million in lost revenue.

[HF782](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), attempts to make restitution.

It would eliminate rate reductions in Medical Assistance imposed in 2002, 2003 and 2005 for inpatient and outpatient services under the fee-for-service program. This would neutralize about 40 percent of the cuts when added with federal match dollars.

Heard by members of the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division Feb. 27, the bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

“We know that there’s a hefty fiscal note with this,” Mark McAfee, representing the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, said. “But there may be an even bigger one down the line if nothing is done.”

Huntley contested the fiscal note, which determined the legislation would cost the state approximately \$252 million. He said the analysis overestimated the price because it included appropriations not offered in the bill.

A companion bill, [SF635](#), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. Its sponsor is [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester).

— M. SIMPSON

Helping the mentally ill

Legislation seeking to reshape and financially replenish services affecting the mentally ill was approved by the House Mental Health Division Feb. 23 and sent to the House Health and Human Services Committee.

[Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), sponsor of [HF196](#), said that the legislation, which would affect corrections, public and higher education, families, health care and counties, would stay as a complete package as the bill moves its way through the committee process. She had initially broken it into dozens of smaller pieces of legislation.

Greiling successfully offered amendments that remove requirements for mental health assessments of specified convicts, slightly

modifies a loan forgiveness program for mental health professionals serving ethnic populations and exempts certain college students from a health insurance mandate imposed by the bill.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) expressed concern about those students who would be required to carry coverage.

“We’re adding to the cost of going to college,” he said. “I know you’re going to get a lot of reaction from the higher ed community.”

He pushed for better language on the type of coverage required, saying that students shouldn’t resign themselves to low quality plans. He successfully offered an amendment to remove penalties on noncompliant institutions.

[Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) unsuccessfully tried to delete TeenScreen, a voluntary mental health screening program for youth, after extensive testimony about the flaws of the program.

“TeenScreen...has the significant problem of lack of expert agreement on the diagnostic criteria for the illnesses, much less the screening instruments themselves,” said Karen Effrem, a member of the EdWatch Board of Directors.

A companion bill, [SF148](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Stem cell research

A bill that could potentially further stem cell research was approved by a House division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF34](#) would establish a state policy for stem cell research, and permit the [University of Minnesota](#) to spend state money on such research. It would also require health care providers treating infertility patients to provide information regarding the disposition of any human embryos after fertility treatment.

The House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division devoted much of two meetings to the bill before giving its approval Feb. 27 and referring it to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

“Public funding means research will be done in public view and that the results will be available to the public,” Kahn said. “We don’t want to outsource superior science. This research will be done somewhere.”

Proponents view research expansion as a potential way to discover cures for diseases such as Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s diseases.

It’s not enough to just work on blood cells because they don’t work with all diseases, said

Jackie Hunt Christensen, who has Parkinson’s disease.

Opponents said that embryonic stem cell research terminates a human life and others expressed concern that this could ultimately lead to cloning.

“Deliberately destroying human life for research purposes, regardless of human development, is morally wrong,” said Bishop Richard Pates, auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. “We should not be forced by our state government to pay for the direct killing of innocent human persons with our tax dollars.”

Kahn countered that countless fertilized eggs are destroyed through in vitro fertilization.

“People with Parkinson’s disease, diabetes, ALS or multiple sclerosis should not be forced to suffer or die because of someone else’s religious convictions,” she said. “Cells that would have died are used to continue life. What could be more pro-life than that?”

An amendment put forth by Kahn, and successfully offered by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman, said “a person who knowingly engages or assists, directly or indirectly, in the cloning of a human being is guilty of a felony.”

A companion bill, [SF100](#), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. COOK

HIGHER EDUCATION

Regent recommendations

The names of four people to serve on the [University of Minnesota Board of Regents](#) were forwarded Feb. 27 by a joint legislative committee, but only one received a favorable recommendation.

The committee, comprised of 10 House and 10 Senate members evenly divided by party, recommended that Linda Cohen serve on the university’s governing body.

Regents serve six-year terms without pay.

Cohen is a licensed psychologist and licensed marriage and family therapist, and seven-year member of the Wayzata School Board.

Peter Bell, Cynthia Leshner and Venora Hung were forwarded without recommendations to the joint legislative convention.

Bell, chairman of the Metropolitan Council, has been a regent since 2003; Leshner, the president and CEO of Northern States Power Company, was appointed last year by Gov. Tim Pawlenty to a fill a board vacancy; and Hung, who would serve as a student at-large member, is a university law student.

Each was approved 11-9, but because

none of them received a majority vote by each body, they were forwarded without recommendation.

However, that may be in violation of statute.

A change in the [2005 omnibus higher education law](#) requires the governor to forward the names of his choices to the joint committee.

The law states, "... the joint legislative committees shall meet to consider the governor's nominees for regent of the University of Minnesota for possible presentation to a joint convention of the legislature. The joint committee may only recommend to the joint convention nominees recommended by the governor. If the joint committee does not recommend a governor's nominee, the governor must submit a different nominee for the same vacancy."

After much discussion about the intent of the statute, and to what body the governor must recommend new candidates, the vote was 19-1 to forward Leshner's name to the convention without recommendation. [Sen. David Hann](#) (R-Eden Prairie) was the lone no vote, because he was uncertain if it was permissible. The names of Bell and Hung were also forwarded on 19-1 votes.

"Ultimately the constitution requires us to decide in a joint convention. People can be nominated from the floor whether they're recommended by the governor or not," said [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul).

"If we're going to forward something without a recommendation, the governor must submit another nomination," said [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti). "This isn't a presentation, recommendation thing. That's the statute."

"Maybe that will happen," Pappas responded.

[Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul) questioned if the other at-large finalists, former Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar) and former Hennepin County Commissioner John Derus, could be forwarded.

"I don't think we have the authority in statute, at least, but we can do anything we want once we get to the floor," said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia).

No meeting date was set for the joint convention.

—M. Cook

HOUSING

Mobile homeowner rights

Mobile home residents contend with a set of issues unique from most homeowners because they own the house they occupy, but not the land beneath it.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Bev Adrian, a former resident of the Shady Lane manufactured home park that was sold in 2006, rearranges some of the 491 model homes that were placed outside the front doors of the Capitol Feb. 28 by the All Parks Alliance for Change. The group is attempting to get legislation passed that would protect manufactured home park residents and prevent the loss of affordable housing due to park closure. Fourteen parks have closed since 2000, resulting in the loss of 491 manufactured homes.

So when a mobile park owner announces the sale and closure of his or her property, tenants are faced with several expensive options: relocate and desert the home, move the home or buy the land.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine), [HF1205](#) would force park owners to pay residents relocation costs upon the closure of a park. Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), [HF1301](#) would give park residents first right of refusal — the opportunity to match the purchase price — for a 90-day period if a park owner intends to sell. It also offers tax incentives to owners who sell to park residents.

"We need to be a leader at the state level to provide some stability to these homeowners," Kranz said. "There are 50,000 households — about 180,000 people — living in manufactured homes and 80 percent are low-income."

Current law allows municipalities to decide if and how much residents will be compensated by park owners if they're forced to move. Kranz's bill would mandate relocation costs and the expense items considered, and would entitle residents a payment based on the fair market value of their home if they can't relocate it.

Current law also provides first right of refusal for 45 days to mobile home residents if their park will close.

Opponents said the bills would unfairly punish park owners.

"We're talking about preserving this product-type," said Mike Schrader, executive

vice president of Venture Real Estate Services. He threatened legal action if Moe's bill were passed, saying it was unconstitutional.

The House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division approved both bills Feb. 28 and sent HF1205 to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee and HF1301 to the House Taxes Committee.

A pair of companion bills, [SF1196](#), sponsored by [Sen. Michael Jungbauer](#) (R-East Bethel), and [SF1253](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), await action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

INSURANCE

Expanding coverage for hearing aids

A phone call from a distressed parent prompted [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) to sponsor a bill that would require health insurers to cover hearing aids for children regardless of when or how hearing loss occurred.

Approved Feb. 22 by the House Health and Human Services Committee, HF633 was referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. A companion bill, [SF805](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

Previously the state did not mandate coverage of hearing aids unless the child

suffered a hearing problem, known as functional congenital malformation, that is often tested for at birth.

Sertich questioned this policy. "I don't think we should delineate between those children who suffer from this very particular condition or (those who) potentially have hearing loss in any other way, shape or form."

After testimony in support of the bill, discussion turned to insurance mandates, which, according to Phil Stalboerger, director of legislative affairs for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, total a nation-high 62.

"While the cost of this mandate will be minimal, we do continue to hear from small business (and) individuals that any increase, whether it be small or large, will bring greater and greater difficulty in affording those premiums," he said.

The bill would not affect the self-insured market — those employers that assume the risks of health insurance for their employees — which is exempt from state laws and taxes.

— M. SIMPSON

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

New city buildings

Sometimes it's better to own than rent.

For almost 10 years, the city of Winsted has paid out more than \$217,000 to rent space for its city hall and police station. To do so for another decade would cost approximately \$450,000.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ron Shimanski](#) (R-Silver Lake), [HF102](#) would help the city build its own facilities.

It would authorize the city of Winsted to issue \$4.9 million in bonds, backed by city property taxes, for a new city hall, community center, police station and lakefront improvements. Approved Feb. 28 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, the bill was referred to the House Taxes Committee.

Mary Ippel, an attorney with Briggs and Morgan, said the bill is necessary because Winsted cannot issue bonds outside of the net debt limitations for the city currently in statute.

In discussing the project with residents for more than three years, Winsted City Administrator Brent Mareck said residents have indicated they don't need a referendum, and have told city leaders to do what it takes to get the job done.

A companion bill, [SF98](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel), was laid over Feb. 7 by the Senate Taxes Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— C. GREEN

Events center funding

Bemidji wants to extend a 0.5 percent sales tax to fund a new regional event and convention center.

[HF1103](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), proposes that the city be allowed to expand the projects funded from the existing sales tax revenues to cover its share of construction costs for the center, up to \$50 million plus bond costs. Presented to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 27, the bill was referred to the House Taxes Committee without recommendation.

Bemidji Mayor Richard Lehmann said the current sales tax, dedicated to parks and trails projects, will expire when \$9.8 million is collected.

The proposed legislation would extend the tax until bonds for both projects are paid off or revenues to pay the parks and trails bonds have been raised, plus 30 years. In last year's general election, city residents approved the extension.

The Legislature has already appropriated \$3 million for the planning and design of the center, Lehmann said.

John Carlson, chairman of the events task force finance subcommittee, said that not only will the center provide a new venue for

some of the smaller communities in northern Minnesota, there could be up to \$12 million pumped into the local economy and more than 200 full- and part-time jobs created. The center is also proposed as the future home of the Bemidji State University hockey teams.

A companion bill, [SF1093](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), was laid over Feb. 27 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Commission elimination

The [Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government](#), which meets infrequently, would be eliminated, under a bill approved Feb. 28 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. It awaits action on the House floor.

Sponsored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), [HF15/SF19](#) would require the Metropolitan Council to submit information to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over metropolitan affairs rather than the commission. The information would include the council's tax rates and dollar amounts levied for the current year, proposed property tax rates and levies, operating and capital budgets, work program and capital improvement program.

The 14-member commission, comprised of equal numbers of House and Senate members, addresses issues related to the Metropolitan Council, Hilstrom said. The commission has no authority but to make recommendations to legislative metropolitan affairs committees.

Hilstrom, chairwoman of the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, said real oversight can happen more efficiently in the committee process.

The bill, approved 64-0 by the Senate Jan. 22, now goes to the House floor.

— P. OSTBERG

MILITARY

Deferred local assessments

Along with a new street or other local improvement, generally comes an assessment to the benefiting property owner. Under current law, a person who is over the age of 65 or permanently and totally disabled may be given a little more time to pay the bill.

[Rep. Connie Ruth](#) (R-Owatonna) sponsors [HF284](#), which would add any veteran who has been ordered into federal active service to the Hardship Assessment Statute. Approved Feb.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Winsted City Administrator Brent Mareck testifies before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 28 in support of a bill that would authorize the city to issue bonds for construction of a city hall, community center and police station.

23 by the House Veterans Affairs Division, the bill was referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee. Approved there Feb. 28 it next goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

Under the bill, eligible service members could make a case to their local unit of government for hardship and have their assessment payments deferred.

The bill's original language applied to those experiencing deployment of one year or longer, but [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) successfully amended the time limit to six months to coincide with the specified lengths of deployment of the various service branches. It was amended further by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee to eliminate any reference to a time period deployed.

About 3,000 members of the Minnesota National Guard are deployed overseas, said Col. Eric Ahlness, government relations officer for the Guard. "One thing that we found is very important is to retain a sense of normalcy for the service members and their families during a deployment. A special assessment imposed upon them can sometimes be the straw that breaks the camel's back."

A companion bill, [SF170](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dick Day](#) (R-Owatonna), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

Keeping veterans here

Several states are aggressively working to attract veterans, recognizing the skill set they bring to the workforce.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), [HF300](#) is part of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's package of proposals to make Minnesota a more veteran-friendly state.

Under the measure approved by the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 23, military and military retirement pay would be exempt from state income tax. The change would be phased in over tax years 2007 to 2010. It would also create a new income tax subtraction for survivor's benefits that would be phased in over four years beginning with taxable year 2007.

Before being approved Feb. 28 by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee, the bill was amended to exclude for state income tax purposes the income earned by certain full-time Minnesota National Guard and Reserve members. Current law only applies to full-time military. The bill next goes to the House Taxes Committee.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids)

said that Minnesota has to become more competitive with states that are adjusting their tax policies to attract retired military personnel to fill the employment gap left by retiring baby boomers. Once here, they will be paying taxes because many will be employed in high-paying occupations or starting their own businesses.

"Minnesota is a leader in service to our country," retired Col. Paul Adams said. After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps for 27 years, he now works with the St. Paul School District, but resides in Prescott, Wis., because of that state's tax exemption for military retirement pay.

He said the bill would help Minnesota receive a return on its military tax dollar investment, by "attracting a highly trained workforce that the state needs to remain a

leader in the 21st century."

A companion bill, [SF160](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), and was laid over Feb. 22 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

Tax break for disabled veterans

A military veteran with a service-connected total or permanent disability would be eligible for a homestead exemption from property taxes, under [HF390](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia).

The proposed exemption would also carry over to the surviving spouse, if they co-own the property. Approved by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 28, the bill was

CHARACTER PLAY



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Portraying Josiah Snelling, Jeff Nordin plays the fife in the Rotunda Feb. 22 as part of the Minnesota Historical Society's "History Matters Day." A model of Fort Snelling, named for Josiah Snelling, sits on the table.

referred to the House Taxes Committee.

Rukavina sponsored a similar bill last year. A fiscal note at that time showed there is an estimated 2,800 homeowners who would qualify for the exemption. Any gain to the General Fund because qualifying homeowners would no longer be eligible for a state property tax refund could be offset by a tax-shift resulting in an increase in state-paid property tax refunds to other homeowners.

A companion bill, [SF1065](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

TAXES

Border city enterprise

Keeping cities competitive on the state's western border is the basis for a bill heard by the House Taxes Committee Feb. 27.

Sponsored by [Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead), [HF130](#) would reauthorize \$1.5 million for border city enterprise zone and development zone tax reductions. The allocation would be divided equally between the two programs. The money would be divided among the western border cities of Moorhead, Dilworth, East Grand Forks, Breckenridge and Ortonville on a per capita basis.

"This will help those cities stay competitive," Lanning said. "North Dakota and South Dakota continue to be very stiff competition as we try to retain our businesses and attract new businesses."

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Moorhead lost about 15 percent of its population, seven schools were closed and 500,000-square feet of the commercial/industrial property in the city was vacant, Lanning said. In 1983, the border cities asked for targeted relief to enable them to be more competitive. He said the cities have seen modest growth since 1983 because of the allocation. He added that the bill would help "even the playing field" to keep businesses from going to North Dakota where businesses receive generous benefits.

Breckenridge Mayor Cliff Barth agreed with Lanning.

"We need that competitive edge for a town of 3,500," he said.

The money for the border cities would have to be reauthorized every two years, which has happened since 1983, Lanning said.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion the omnibus tax bill.

A companion bill, [SF245](#), sponsored by [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), has been laid over by the Senate Taxes Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HEGMAN

Corporate tax credits

Corporations would be allowed a tax deduction for contributions to a pre-kindergarten scholarship fund if [HF20](#) becomes law.

Under the bill, sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), corporations would be able to deduct 50 percent of the amount, up to a maximum \$100,000, contributed for pre-kindergarten scholarships. The House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division approved the bill Feb. 27 and sent it to the House Finance Committee.

"We can draw in some private dollars to help supplement public dollars we spend on early childhood programs," Thissen said. "The programs would be aimed and focused at school readiness."

Children younger than 7 years old and not yet in kindergarten living in a household with an income less than 75 percent of the statewide median income would be eligible for the scholarships.

The bill stipulates that any organization granting the scholarships allocate 85 percent of its annual revenue for students to attend qualifying programs.

"Corporate tax credits can help expand access to school readiness programs," said Barbara Devlin, Richfield Public Schools superintendent. "Corporations have shown their interest in investing in our future by expanding access to early childhood learning experiences."

If the average scholarship amount were \$2,000, about 3,000 children would benefit. If the average scholarship amount were \$4,000 the number of recipients would be about 1,500, Devlin said.

The bill originally had a cap of \$3.5 million for tax-deductible contributions, but an amendment removed it and new amount has not been determined.

A companion bill, [SF1089](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), is scheduled to be heard March 7 by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Homestead tax cap

A bill that would limit homestead property taxes to 5 percent of the property owner's income was laid over Feb. 23 by the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF856](#) would benefit low- to middle-income Minnesotans beginning in fiscal year 2009. It would have a \$55.3 million impact on the General Fund in fiscal year 2009.

"People are crying out for real property tax reform," Atkins said.

He added that having a 5 percent cap would

give property taxpayers some security and predictability. They would not have worry about paying 10 percent to 20 percent of their incomes to property tax. Homeowners making \$77,520 or less would get an additional refund for any payments made over 5 percent of their income.

Under the current law, homeowners receive a property tax refund based on the amount of their property taxes in relationship to their household income. The maximum refund is \$1,700 and is available for homeowners who make less than \$91,120.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in a division report.

A companion bill, [SF947](#), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

License reinstatement payments

As a prosecuting attorney, [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul) has found that many people charged with misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors for driving offenses would like to get their license back but they can't pay the fee.

Sponsored by Lesch, [HF693](#) would allow a defendant to pay 25 percent of the fee to reinstate their license for one year, and 25 percent in each of the next two years to keep the license valid. Once the final 25 percent is paid in year four, the license would become renewable on a standard schedule as measured from the date of original issuance. A handling charge may be imposed for each payment.

The bill was approved Feb. 22 by the House Transportation Finance Division and sent to the House Finance Committee.

Travis Schwantes, managing attorney for the 10th Judicial District, supports the bill.

That morning he was in court in Stillwater, where about half of the 60 cases on an arraignment calendar were for driving after suspension, revocation or cancellation. Most cases were continued for three months. "A good number of those drivers were unable to get valid because of the fee," he said. "There are significant costs to the court that need to be considered when staffing and processing these cases."

The provisions would apply in cases where the license was revoked for a DWI conviction, failure or refusal to take a chemical test, or a vehicular homicide conviction. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the revocations carry a \$250 reinstatement fee, plus a \$430 surcharge.

A fiscal note indicates the state would lose

about \$11 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$7.7 million, \$5.1 million and \$3 million in the three subsequent fiscal years.

“There are probably some reinstatement things that would be paid that otherwise

wouldn’t if we give them the opportunity for a payment plan, because a lot of people now just check out, ... they continue to drive revoked,” Lesch said.

A companion bill, [SF680](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), was to be heard March 1 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— M. Cook

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PEOPLE

Focus on the future

Knuth looks to help shape the state’s ‘next 50 to 100 years’

By Nick Busse

Last October, a Twin Cities Public Television reporter billed House District 50B as a “classic swing seat,” and argued it was one of the key



Rep. Kate Knuth

paces that would help determine control of the Legislature.

[Rep. Kate Knuth](#) (DFL-New Brighton), who won that race, has a simpler view.

“I decided that I could step up and be part of a positive vision for the future of the state,” Knuth said.

Knuth, one of the Legislature’s youngest members, said she was motivated less by partisan politics than a desire to see government focus on issues critical to the state’s future, like education, health care, transportation and the environment.

She said the state has been “distracted” in recent years by issues that don’t necessarily affect people’s everyday lives.

“I’m a relatively young elected official, but really I think we are in a crucial time for a lot of important issues, and shaping how we want the next 50 to 100 years of Minnesota to be,” she said.

Youth aside, Knuth comes to the Capitol with a fairly impressive resume, including degrees from Oxford University and the University of Chicago, where she was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study the oil industry in Norway.

She currently works at Hamline University as a fellow in the Center for Global Environmental Education — a job that perhaps leaves her well-prepared for her House committee assignments, three out of four of which are environment-related.

Although she’s been around the world,

DISTRICT 50B

2002 population: 36,953
Largest city: Fridley
Counties: Anoka and Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, health care, transportation and environment

Knuth said her heart belongs in Minnesota and in her home city of New Brighton, where her father, Daniel, served as a state representative from 1983-1988.

“I think Minnesota is a really special place in the way that people are involved in government, and the way people make government work by being a part of it. So, I really value that, and a lot of the things that lead to that, like a good education system and the ability to move around the state — a lot of the infrastructure we have,” Knuth said, adding, “I saw a lot of those things being jeopardized in some ways.”

Man toward the middle

Kranz aims for balanced approach in oft-partisan politics

By **MIKE COOK**

[Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) calls himself a “Suburban Democrat.”

“Out on the campaign trail it hit me that, to a lot of my constituents, Democrat or Republican means nothing. People are just fed up,” he said. “I’m a 25-year resident of this area, I deliberately chose to raise my kids (Lucas, 10, and Ryan, 8) here; I like this area. I’m not either one, so I started calling myself a ‘Suburban Democrat.’”



Rep. Scott Kranz

He sees himself as “fiscally responsible, even to the point of being conservative,” but with a moderate point of view on social issues. “I like to think that in most cases my opinion goes to the direction of if you want to do

something on your own time you should have the freedom to do that, but when it affects the rights of others we need to seriously look at it.”

It should come as no surprise that education is a top priority for Kranz, who teaches social studies at Spring Lake Park High School and serves on the House Early Childhood Learning and the Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness finance divisions. His wife, Kristi, also teaches social studies at the school.

“The reason I ran was primarily the lack of investment in our children from the womb up through paying college tuition,” he said. “I’ve had many discussions with kids going into college, or considering college, and realistically not having a way to pay for it. That really bothers me. I saw some very bright kids from average or low-income families

| DISTRICT 51A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,756 |
| Largest city: Blaine |
| County: Anoka |
| Top concerns: Education, affordable health care and property taxes |

that didn’t go to college because of the recent increases in tuition.”

Serving as a union president and contract negotiator, Kranz also knows firsthand the impact of health care on a school district budget. He has also heard stories of small businesses losing good employees because they can’t afford to offer benefits.

Like most members, his constituents see rising property taxes as a concern.

“The increases and the lack of state support for our services have really hit a lot of our homeowners,” he said. “There are people that have grown up in that area that can’t afford to retire in that area.”

A viable rural lifestyle

Tschumper will work to make health care affordable

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

[Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent) is one of a declining breed amongst members.

“I am the last dairy farmer,” he may say in jest, but the state’s declining dairy industry is no laughing matter to this farmer who lives on land his great-grandfather established in 1867. “In 1977, there were 30,000 dairy farms in the state, today there are 5,000,” said Tschumper, who runs one of the 115 dairy farms left in Houston County.



Rep. Ken Tschumper

Tschumper campaigned on issues that can make a rural lifestyle viable for the next generation of farmers and small businesses. But nothing can happen without affordable health care, he said.

“I can do more for rural families by

trying to do something to make health care affordable,” he said. That’s why he is happy with his assignment to the House Health and Human Services Committee.

“Huge numbers of people, farmers and business owners can no longer afford health care for their employees or themselves,” Tschumper said, adding that highly educated spouses of farmers often work at a minimum wage job just to provide health care coverage for the family.

A supporter of universal health care, he said the affordability issue also affects health care providers and nursing homes.

He favors increasing the reimbursement to nursing homes, and says they play a very important role in small communities by providing employment and keeping the elderly close to their extended families.

Another key to a vibrant rural economy is quality education, he said. “People are not going to live in rural areas unless we have

| DISTRICT 31B |
|---|
| 2002 population: 36,723 |
| Largest city: La Crescent |
| Counties: Houston and Fillmore |
| Top concerns: Health care, education and economic development |

good schools,” he said, while emphasizing that health care, good schools and economic development are intertwined.

“If we can come up with health care solutions, it will make it possible for small businesses to locate in rural areas, provide employment and the tax base to support the schools. We have to move ahead on all three of these things.”

Tschumper also serves on the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, House Ways and Means Committee, and is vice-chairman of the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

Monday, February 26

HF1338-Brynaert (DFL)

Finance

Extended employment services for persons with disabilities funding provided, and purpose and need established.

HF1339-Poppe (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State government record retention provision deleted.

HF1340-Tingelstad (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State boards and advisory groups governing laws revised.

HF1341-Tingelstad (R)

Taxes

Adoption expenses refundable income tax credit authorized.

HF1342-Smith (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Qualified domestic violence-related offenses and crimes of violence defined and technical changes provided.

HF1343-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Wetland replacement requirements and agency service requirements modified and civil enforcement provided.

HF1344-Kranz (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission funding provided.

HF1345-Dittrich (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota Early Learning Foundation funding provided.

HF1346-Koenen (DFL)

Finance

Bird Island; Victory Center construction funding provided.

HF1347-Thissen (DFL)

Finance

Special motor vehicle license plates remembering victims of impaired drivers authorized.

HF1348-Paymar (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Ethanol producer payment program replaced with a need-based, market-driven subsidy.

HF1349-Paulsen (R)

Finance

India Center established at the University of Minnesota.

HF1350-Eken (DFL)

Finance

White Earth Band of Chippewa renewable energy feasibility grant provided.

HF1351-Hornstein (DFL)

Finance

Long-range transportation solutions study provided.

HF1352-Moe (DFL)

Finance

Youth job skills development statewide program funding provided.

HF1353-Hilstrom (DFL)

Finance

Hennepin County Violent Offender Task Force funding provided.

HF1354-Paymar (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Criminal sexual conduct victims polygraph requirement prohibited.

HF1355-Clark (DFL)

Finance

WomenVenture grant provided for women's business development program.

HF1356-Anzelc (DFL)

Taxes

Land utilization project land payments in lieu of taxation increased.

HF1357-Walker (DFL)

Finance

Low-income heating assistance funding provided.

HF1358-Solberg (DFL)

Finance

Grand Rapids; Northern Minnesota RuralPlex Initiative grant provided to operate a pilot workforce program.

HF1359-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Auto insurance medical expense and other benefits modified.

HF1360-Simon (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Data practices duties and classifications clarified.

HF1361-Fritz (DFL)

Finance

Deaf and hard-of-hearing mentor program funding provided for families of infants and children that have a hearing loss.

HF1362-Doty (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Sucker regulations expanded to include early season for spearing and netting.

HF1363-Morrow (DFL)

Finance

Trunk Highway 14 and Nicollet County State-Aid Highway 41 interchange construction provided.

HF1364-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Building contractors insurance requirements modified.

HF1365-Kohls (R)

Finance

Local bridge improvement program established and previous bridge improvement fund appropriations criteria expanded.

HF1366-Rukavina (DFL)

Finance

Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board forest land purchase authorized using the Douglas J. Johnson economic trust fund, Iron Range Miners' Memorial Forest established and funds transfer authorized.

HF1367-Liebling (DFL)

Taxes

Alternative minimum tax exemption phaseout threshold inflation adjustment provided.

HF1368-Olin (DFL)

Taxes

County program aid appropriation increased.

HF1369-Garofalo (R)

Finance

Cannon River pedestrian bridge funding provided.

HF1370-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Finance

Midway Township sewer reconstruction funding provided.

HF1371-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Finance

North Shore Express Intercity Rail Initiative funding provided.

HF1372-Ward (DFL)

Taxes

Homeowners' property tax refunds maximum amount increased.

HF1373-Hansen (DFL)

Finance

Roadsides for wildlife program funding provided.

HF1374-Anzelc (DFL)

Finance

Northeast Entrepreneur Fund technical assistance and business training funding provided.

HF1375-Liebling (DFL)

Finance

Rochester; Mayo Civic Center Complex improvements design funding provided.

HF1376-Holberg (R)

Transportation Finance Division

Extinguishing interest in abandoned town road requirements modified.

HF1377-Johnson (DFL)

Finance

Greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy development process and report required.

HF1378-Paulsen (R)

Taxes

Minnesota college savings plan contributions income tax subtraction provided.

HF1379-Paulsen (R)

Finance

Postsecondary study abroad grant program established.

HF1380-Dominguez (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Criminal justice data sealed under specified circumstances, legal consequences provided, business screening services required to correct and delete disputed records and civil penalties imposed.

HF1381-Atkins (DFL)

Taxes

Local government aid inflation adjustment provided.

HF1382-Thissen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Phosphorus use in household dishwasher detergent restricted.

HF1383-Moe (DFL)

Finance

American Indian scholarship administration transferred and office required to distribute scholarships.

HF1384-Bunn (DFL)

Taxes

Federal tax conformity provided relating to individual income, corporate franchise, and estate taxes, and property tax refunds.

HF1385-Liebling (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State flag design task force established.

HF1386-Jaros (DFL)**Finance**

Duluth Children's Museum funding provided.

HF1387-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Long-term homeless supportive services funding provided.

HF1388-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Court provisions modified relating to attorney general, state court administrator, guardian ad litem and judges; and obsolete provisions removed.

HF1389-Thissen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

State forest traditional areas provided.

HF1390-Howes (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Managed forests eliminated for purposes of off-road vehicle travel and forest classification requirements modified.

HF1391-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Parenting plans custody designations modified.

HF1392-Hilty (DFL)**Finance**

Hydrogen renewable energy initiative established and hydrogen energy use policies established.

HF1393-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

MINNCOR prison industries governing laws clarified and updated, and community corrections counties expenditure and cost statements date adjusted.

HF1394-Lenczewski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent School District No. 271, Bloomington, single-member school board election districts established.

HF1395-Eken (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Nursing facilities, ICFs/MR, and community-based long-term care providers rate increases provided; nursing facility payment rates floor established; and long-term care payment rate account established.

HF1396-Madore (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Guardians and conservators requirements and procedures modified.

HF1397-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Duluth nursing facility payment rates increased to the Duluth median rate.

HF1398-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Newborns and mothers transfer, accompaniment and hospital care coverage required.

HF1399-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Northeastern Minnesota community-based health care coverage program demonstration project established, federal grant program references removed and evaluation report due dates modified.

HF1400-Tingelstad (R)**Health & Human Services**

Adoption; genetic siblings provided information assistance regarding other siblings.

HF1401-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Reverse mortgage incentive program established, eligibility requirements and other standards provided.

HF1402-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Inpatient hospital payment system; ratable reductions eliminated from rebased rate relating to an essential hospital for children with disabilities.

HF1403-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Inpatient hospital payment system rates provided for essential hospital for children with disabilities.

HF1404-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Hospital outpatient services rate increase provided for a specified essential hospital for children with disabilities.

HF1405-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Incidental nursing services coverage authorized under the elderly waiver, rate exceptions provided, and elderly waiver reimbursement rate limits increased.

HF1406-Otremba (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Preschool programs operated by schools exempted from child care licensure.

HF1407-Clark (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Environmental justice mapping federal funding application required.

HF1408-Howes (R)**Finance**

Programs for the all-inclusive care of the elderly (PACE) programs authorization modified.

HF1409-Gottwalt (R)**Finance**

Well contractor's license provisions modified.

HF1410-Anzelc (DFL)**Finance**

Technical and vocational revenue program for collaborative high school and postsecondary vocational programs established.

HF1411-Howes (R)**Finance**

Small schools declining enrollment revenue provided.

HF1412-Benson (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Location equity index created, general education revenue formula modified and specified school districts' revenue increased.

HF1413-Bly (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Supportive community partnerships planning grant provided.

HF1414-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Learning Law and Democracy Foundation grant provided.

HF1415-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Hazardous pupil transportation services levy authorized.

HF1416-Ward (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Cuyuna County State Recreation Area Citizens Advisory Council established and state park permit exemption provided.

HF1417-Juhnke (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Kandiyohi County; Green Lake Eurasian water milfoil pilot project established.

HF1418-Eken (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources rulemaking authority state park permit, and other provisions modified; and Mineral Coordinating Committee expiration extended.

HF1419-Garofalo (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Dakota County tax-forfeited land bordering public water conveyance authorized.

HF1420-Poppe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Individual sewage treatment design, installation, maintenance, inspection and operation licensing requirements modified.

HF1421-Wagenius (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural Resources Department easement acquisition requirements established.

HF1422-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

School finance equalizing factors indexed.

HF1423-Anzelc (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 361, International Falls, authorized to purchase property with its building lease levy authority.

HF1424-Paulsen (R)**E-12 Education**

World language academic standards, proficiency, resources and capacity development provided.

HF1425-Holberg (R)**E-12 Education**

Students allowed to participate in high school league-sponsored activities after completing licensed treatment programs.

HF1426-Davnie (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Extended year kindergarten program created.

HF1427-Ward (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 181, Brainerd, fund transfer authorized.

HF1428-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Site decision-making program grants provided.

HF1429-Urdahl (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Meeker County EDA authorized to increase its membership to nine.

HF1430-Clark (DFL)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Workforce development intermediaries' grants-in-aid authorized.

HF1431-Moe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Board of Water and Soil Resources membership modified.

HF1432-Huntley (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

St. Louis County civil service director provisions modified.

HF1433-Olin (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Livestock compensation provisions modified.

HF1434-Atkins (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Building contractors right to bring an action for contribution or indemnity preserved.

HF1435-Anzelc (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Forest products load permissible items defined.

HF1436-Hamilton (R)**Taxes**

Relative agricultural homestead minimum acreage modified.

HF1437-Hornstein (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Airports Commission required to meet in a neighborhood affected by airport noise, and advance notice of proposed annual budget required.

HF1438-Mariani (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Drivers' licenses; public safety commissioner prohibited from complying with the Real ID Act.

HF1439-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Contraband cigarettes disposition provided.

HF1440-Kahn (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Certificates of pay equity compliance required as condition for certain state contracts.

HF1441-Simon (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Limited purpose trust companies non-substantive term changes provided.

HF1442-Slawik (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Compassionate Care of Sexual Assault Victims Act requiring hospital emergency rooms to provide emergency contraception, prophylactic antibiotics and information to sexual assault victims.

HF1443-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Contractors requirements and prevailing wage provisions modified and penalties imposed.

HF1444-Bigham (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health risk limits established for perfluorooctanoic acid, perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorobutanoic acid.

HF1445-Tingelstad (R)**Health & Human Services**

Adoption records access provided and data classification modified.

HF1446-Clark (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Alcohol health impact fund and fee established, controlled substance, DWI and prostitution provisions modified, Phillips neighborhood pilot project established.

HF1447-Hortman (DFL)**Taxes**

Diesel truck idling reduction equipment income tax credit provided.

HF1448-Juhnke (DFL)**Ways & Means**

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy mitigation and outreach efforts funding provided.

HF1449-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources and clean water purposes dedicated funding provided, sales tax increased, funds and council established, bonds issued and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1450-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Homeless outreach grant program established.

HF1451-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Department of Agriculture money appropriated for invasive aquatic species research.

HF1452-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

University of Minnesota money appropriated to study the economic implications of growing perennial grasses.

HF1453-Hilty (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Public Utilities Commission monthly reports from utilities required regarding residential accounts.

HF1454-Peterson, S. (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Neighborhood youth organization money appropriated.

HF1455-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Rural renewable energy initiatives provided.

HF1456-Dominguez (DFL)**Finance**

Squad car camera technology upgrade grants money appropriated.

HF1457-Rukavina (DFL)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

MnSCU Board of Trustees increased and appointments to the board changed.

HF1458-Dill (DFL)**Taxes**

Sales tax applied to sales of prefabricated homes.

HF1459-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Taxes**

Modular homes exempted from the property tax.

HF1460-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Taxes**

Modular and manufactured home sourcing rules modified.

HF1461-Smith (R)**Finance**

Verdict, awards and judgments interest regulated.

HF1462-Liebling (DFL)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Biobusiness center construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1463-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Referendum to impose a 0.50 percent metropolitan area sales tax for transportation and transit in the metropolitan area required, and imposition of county sales taxes for transportation purposes authorized.

HF1464-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Emergency 911 emergency telecommunications service fee increased and statewide public safety radio communication system provided.

HF1465-Kohls (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Corrections commissioner required to develop a standard formula for calculating the per diem cost in county and regional jails.

HF1466-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Dakota County authorized to impose a county mortgage registry and deed tax, and use of the proceeds provided.

HF1467-Dittrich (DFL)**Finance**

Transportation commissioner directed to enter into agreements with radio and television media for public service announcements in exchange for traffic information.

HF1468-Eken (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators' salaries established by council, composition of the compensation council provided and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1469-Tschumper (DFL)**Taxes**

Motor fuels excise tax increased and refundable income tax credit allowed.

HF1470-Scalze (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Voluntary Clean Campaign Council, clean campaign pledge and clean campaign advertising code established.

HF1471-Morrow (DFL)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Minnesota Agriculture Education Leadership Council membership expanded to include a representative of private colleges.

HF1472-Huntley (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Compulsive gambling education, treatment, and assessment provided, and social and economic costs of gambling study provided.

HF1473-Smith (R)**Finance**

Crime victims service programs and crime prevention grants authorized.

HF1474-Koenen (DFL)**Taxes**

Lawful gambling tax rate reduced.

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HF1475-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Paratransit services coordination and service standards provided, inter-county service required and one-stop paratransit call centers established.

HF1476-Knuth (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Individual sewage treatment systems provisions modified.

HF1477-Knuth (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Individual sewage treatment systems disclosure provisions modified.

HF1478-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

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

HF1479-Peterson, S. (DFL)**Finance**

Transit fund and transportation endowment fund established and rebate plan rejected.

HF1480-Haws (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Special primary and special election requirements and provisions modified.

HF1481-Peterson, N. (R)
Finance
Bloomington; Hyland K70 ski jump funding provided.

HF1482-Mullery (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Publicly funded employers prohibited from using those funds to influence employee activities.

HF1483-Winkler (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Regional water quality protection and restoration provided.

HF1484-Dittrich (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
Personal financial management information and skills training required at state colleges and universities.

HF1485-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Minority enterprise retention funding provided.

HF1486-Pelowski (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Charitable organizations authorized to participate in joint powers agreements.

HF1487-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Independent School District No. 891, Canby, border aid provided.

HF1488-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Ecological services for native habitats funding provided.

HF1489-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Clean Water Legacy Act ecological services funding provided.

HF1490-Beard (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Scott County hiring process and personnel provisions modified.

HF1491-Kranz (DFL)
Taxes
Residential homestead and agricultural market value credits indexing provided.

HF1492-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Council discount bus passes authorized for charitable organizations.

HF1493-Simon (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Surplus property rulemaking authority granted to the commissioner of administration.

HF1494-Simon (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Campaign finance contribution limits provided for certain candidates.

HF1495-Demmer (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public Employees Retirement Association police and fire plan survivor benefit authorized for the survivor of a deceased member.

HF1496-Johnson (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative pilot project funding provided.

HF1497-Johnson (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board funding provided for the building lives program.

HF1498-Thissen (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Uniform Power of Attorney Act adopted.

HF1499-Hortman (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act adopted as approved and recommended by the National Conference of Commissions on Uniform State Law.

HF1500-Smith (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Child support policy clarifications and improvements provided.

HF1501-Welti (DFL)
Taxes
Residential heating fuels sales tax exemption expanded to include all fuels except natural gas and electricity.

HF1502-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Seasonal recreational property exempted from the state general property tax levy.

HF1503-Walker (DFL)
Taxes
Taxpayer assistance services funding provided.

HF1504-Clark (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
Minnesota investment fund scope amended to promote environmentally safe production and products.

HF1505-Cornish (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Gang and Drug Oversight Council membership expanded to include legislators as nonvoting members.

HF1506-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Public criminal history data; innocent party's name associated with a criminal history authorized to be redacted under certain circumstances.

HF1507-Olin (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
State trails acquisition authority and recreational vehicle requirements modified, off-highway vehicle safety and conservation program established, off-trail snowmobile use provided in certain state forests and state trails modified.

HF1508-Moe (DFL)
Finance
Textbook Pricing and Access Act adopted and pilot textbook rental program established.

HF1509-Tschumper (DFL)
Taxes
Toll-free telephone access required for taxpayer assistance, income tax return processing provided, withholding returns electronic filing required, sales tax assistance study and additional auditors provided.

HF1510-Lesch (DFL)
Finance
Public safety funding provided to replace eliminated federal funds.

HF1511-Simon (DFL)
Taxes
Alternative minimum tax exemption amount increased.

HF1512-Hortman (DFL)
Taxes
Motor vehicle transfer by charitable organization definition modified.

HF1513-Hausman (DFL)
Finance
Monticello nuclear power plant phase out, contingency planning and storage approval required.

HF1514-Atkins (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Aggregate material host fees authorized.

HF1515-Davnie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Credit counseling and debt management services businesses regulated.

HF1516-Swails (DFL)
Taxes
Washington County courts facility construction materials and equipment sales tax exemption provided, and obsolete provision removed.

HF1517-Gunther (R)
Finance
Commission Serving Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing People funding provided.

HF1518-Brown (DFL)
Taxes
Local government aid programs and appropriations modified, and school finance equalizing factors indexed.

HF1519-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Finance
Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board appropriations provided from money received by the board from other public bodies, and decennial comprehensive planning and zoning review funding provided.

HF1520-Dill (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Phosphorus reduction requirements on wastewater treatment facilities modified based on need.

HF1521-Lillie (DFL)
Finance
Trunk Highway 36 improvements funding provided.

HF1522-Lillie (DFL)
Finance
Gateway Trail tunnel funding provided.

HF1523-Bigham (DFL)
Finance
Washington County Disabled Veterans' Rest Camp funding provided.

HF1524-Sailer (DFL)
Finance
American Indian child welfare project expanded.

HF1525-Hackbarth (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Aquaculture water use permitting fees limited.

HF1526-Simon (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Fair Campaign Practices Act complaints hearing funding provided.

HF1527-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Special motor vehicle bronze star veteran's license plates authorized.

HF1528-Paymar (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul; Ordway Center for the Performing Arts renovation funding provided.

HF1529-Hausman (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Highway rest operators prohibited from preventing commercial motor vehicle operators from observing federal "Hours of Service of Drivers" regulations, and maximum vehicle weight on highways provisions modified.

HF1530-Solberg (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Athletic and outdoor equipment for youths in need contributions provided.

HF1531-Solberg (DFL)**Taxes**

Apprenticeship training facilities property tax exemption provided.

HF1532-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

Public safety retiree pensions federal tax rules conformity provided.

HF1533-Slocum (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin-Carver Workforce Investment Board funding provided.

HF1534-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government aid distribution modified and appropriation increased.

HF1535-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Workforce Development Inc., employment and training services pilot project funding provided.

HF1536-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

Mississippi River barrier construction provided to prevent aquatic invasive species from migrating up river.

HF1537-Gunther (R)**Taxes**

Education loans principal and interest payments income tax subtraction provided.

HF1538-Hoppe (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Big game ammunition requirements modified.

HF1539-Hoppe (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Big game bow minimum draw weight imposed.

HF1540-Wagenius (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Endocrine disruptors in waters of the state report required.

HF1541-Thissen (DFL)**Taxes**

Tuition savings plan federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF1542-Zellers (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Methamphetamine precursor drugs consumer purchase limit specified.

HF1543-Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

President and Congress memorialized, by resolution, to replace the Fast Track Trade Authority system.

HF1544-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Propane pre-purchase funding provided as part of the low-income home energy assistance program.

HF1545-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Roseau flood hazard mitigation project funding provided.

HF1546-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Driver's license and identification card applicants automatic voter registration provided.

HF1547-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State elections campaign fund appropriation increased.

HF1548-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Expungements of criminal records law recodified and restructured, and eligibility for expungements expanded.

HF1549-Johnson (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Public Utilities Commission ex parte rules technical change provided.

HF1550-Hortman (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Commercial vehicle inspections provisions modified.

HF1551-Nelson (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Vehicle weight schedules modified for purposes of the vehicle registration tax.

HF1552-Hortman (DFL)**Taxes**

Charitable organizations exempted from gasoline tax.

HF1553-Buesgens (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Agent wagering provided.

HF1554-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Payroll cards regulated.

HF1555-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Energy forward pricing mechanisms terms defined.

HF1556-Berns (R)**E-12 Education**

Alternative teacher professional pay system continued funding provided, staff development revenue restrictions removed and certain districts exempted from 2 percent set-aside for staff development.

HF1557-Tillberry (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School counselors required to supervise non-licensed individuals advising students on educational opportunities and academic planning.

HF1558-Demmer (R)**E-12 Education**

School district timely employment contracts financial incentive provided.

HF1559-Dittrich (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Master teacher training in economics and personal finance provided.

HF1560-Carlson (DFL)**E-12 Education**

State Board of Education established.

HF1561-Faust (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Early intervention adequate yearly progress grants established and formula allowance increased.

HF1562-Mariani (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Literacy skills for students required.

HF1563-Cornish (R)**Finance**

Cooperative secondary facilities program eligibility expanded.

HF1564-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

Special education maintenance of effort adjustment provided.

HF1565-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Consolidating school districts state aid increased.

HF1566-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Safe schools levy increased.

HF1567-Simon (DFL)**Finance**

Special education programs funding restored and special education appropriation made open and standing.

HF1568-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Pupil transportation formulas modified for charter schools.

HF1569-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Driver's license offenses committed in Canada effects specified.

HF1570-Thao (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Compulsive gambling public awareness and treatment funding provided.

HF1571-Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act adopted.

HF1572-Hortman (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Uniform Principal and Income Act of 2000 adopted.

HF1573-Clark (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Congress memorialized, by resolution, to block rules published by the Department of Homeland Security that would preempt state authority to strengthen security at plants housing hazardous chemicals.

HF1574-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Pharmacists required to obtain consent to dispense certain epilepsy drugs.

HF1575-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

School-based health clinic grants program established.

HF1576-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Quality of care impact statement required prior to contracting for basic health care services to persons with disabilities.

HF1577-Lesch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Human services licensing and policy provisions modified.

HF1578-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Mental health services required under all health plans.

HF1579-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Community health workers coverage provided by medical assistance, MinnesotaCare and general assistance medical care.

HF1580-Dettmer (R)
Health & Human Services
Adult foster care and family adult day services license requirements modified.

HF1581-Pelowski (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Youth with disabilities programs licensure granted and licensure standards modification recommendations required.

HF1582-Norton (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Radioactive material license renewal fee eliminated, ionizing radiation-producing equipment fees established, and X-ray equipment operating requirements and lead abatement program provisions modified.

HF1583-Nelson (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities licensure authorized to replace one larger facility, transition period rate established and payment rate for new facilities provided.

HF1584-Benson (DFL)
Finance
School district operating cost differential revenue provided.

HF1585-Simon (DFL)
Finance
Special education programs funding restored, special education revenue formulas fully funded and special education aid appropriation made open and standing.

HF1586-Tschumper (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Statewide health plan purchasing pool study group established.

HF1587-Tschumper (DFL)
Finance
Office of Ombudsman for Older Minnesotans staff positions authorized.

HF1588-Winkler (DFL)
Health & Human Services
State employees electronic health records pilot project established.

HF1589-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Patient visitation by health care agents provided, and visitation rights and right to designate a domestic partner for certain purposes established.

HF1590-Brynaert (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Regional Children's Mental Health Initiative pilot project authorized and enhanced regional children's mental health service system developed.

HF1591-Anzelc (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Workers' compensation payment and retraining provisions modified.

HF1592-Anzelc (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Workers' Compensation Advisory Council appointing authorities modified.

HF1593-Kohls (R)
Commerce & Labor
Retail liquor license fees set by local governments.

HF1594-Hosch (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
National Guard reenlistment bonus program expanded and academic awards provided.

HF1595-Swails (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Statutory housing warranties recovery for breaches regulated.

HF1596-Nelson (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Project labor agreements use regulated.

HF1597-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Southwest transitway included as a top priority Metropolitan Council item.

HF1598-Lillie (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Labor agreements and compensation plans ratified for the Minnesota Law Enforcement Association, the Minnesota Nurses Association and the Office of Higher Education.

HF1599-Masin (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Northwest Airlines Inc., mechanics unemployment benefits eligibility and extra benefits provided.

HF1600-Magnus (R)
Transportation Finance Division
E85-capable vehicles' registration renewal notice required to inform owners of all service stations that provide E85 in owner's area.

HF1601-Anderson, B. (R)
Finance
Novice driver safety education program established and driver instruction permit and provisional drivers' license provisions modified.

HF1602-Hortman (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Teachers additional retirement benefits provided.

HF1603-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Statewide and major local retirement plans submission and review of proposed public pension plan administrative legislation process revised.

HF1604-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
First-class city teacher retirement fund association's sabbatical leave service credit provisions updated.

HF1605-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
First-class city teacher retirement fund associations conforming changes provided in the extended leave of absence program.

HF1606-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minneapolis Firefighters Relief Association statutory references updated.

HF1607-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Salary and average salary definitions updated relating to retirement plans covered by the combined service annuity provision.

HF1608-Bigham (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Secretary of State; registrations, filings and dissolutions of certain entities regulated; fees provided; foreign limited partnership name changes regulated; and notaries public regulation provided.

HF1609-Clark (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Employee statements protected from employer retaliation, complaint procedures established, investigative jurisdiction specified and civil penalties imposed.

HF1610-Hausman (DFL)
Finance
Agricultural society authorized to retain certain admissions sales tax proceeds.

HF1611-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Light rail transit planning, design and construction provisions modified.

HF1612-Fritz (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veterans and soldiers counseling services access improved.

HF1613-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Taxes
Biomass fuel stoves sales tax exemption provided and biomass-fueled electric generation facility construction sales tax exemption extended.

HF1614-Lenczewski (DFL)
Finance
Tax compliance expanded efforts required.

HF1615-Brod (R)
Health & Human Services
Non-hospital performed abortions physician requirement provided and penalties imposed.

HF1616-Mariani (DFL)
Finance
Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020 funding provided.

HF1617-Slawik (DFL)
Ways & Means
Early childhood family education, school readiness and Head Start programs funding increased.

HF1618-Kahn (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Domestic partners of state employees provided health insurance benefits if they are also made available to spouses.

HF1619-Hilstrom (DFL)
Finance
Incarcerated individuals allowed to remain eligible for medical assistance until conviction.

HF1620-Kalin (DFL)
Finance
Chisago County nursing facilities payment rates increased to geographic group III median rate.

HF1621-Bunn (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Environmental health tracking and biomonitoring program established.

HF1622-Clark (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Lead-containing children's items sale prohibited and paint retailers requirements established.

HF1623-Clark (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Dental care for children access pilot program established.

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MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH
MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Incarcerated information

| | |
|---|----------|
| Persons who were in a state correctional facility at some point in fiscal year 2006.... | 13,056 |
| Percent of those that had group or individual contact with a mental health professional..... | 62 |
| Offenders who combined for 32,306 individual therapy sessions..... | 2,459 |
| As percent of all offenders..... | 18.8 |
| Chemical dependency assessments completed in fiscal year 2006..... | 3,283 |
| Inmates diagnosed as either chemical abuser or chemically dependent | 3,253 |
| Percent of offenders involved in various types of programming in fiscal year 2006..... | 87 |
| In fiscal year 2005..... | 84 |
| Three-year, post-release felony reconviction rate for adult offenders released in 2002, as percent | 36 |
| Reincarceration rate, as percent..... | 25 |
| Three-year, post-release felony reconviction rate for juveniles released in 2001 and 2002, as percent..... | 58 |
| Reincarceration rate, as percent..... | 38 |
| Offenders participating in reentry classes in fiscal year 2006..... | 3,058 |
| In fiscal year 2005..... | 2,033 |
| In fiscal year 2004..... | 2,073 |
| Inmates, as percent, participating in MINNCOR to learn job skills and develop a sound work ethic..... | 15 |
| Offenders assigned to educational programming on a full-time basis, as approximate | 1,600 |
| On a part-time basis, as approximate..... | 1,500 |
| GEDs awarded in 2004..... | 658 |
| Average department per diem costs for incarcerating offenders at adult facilities in fiscal year 2006..... | \$80.11 |
| In fiscal year 2005..... | \$76.43 |
| Since the Challenge Incarceration Program began in 1992, estimated millions in savings to the state through reduced prison time and decrease in recidivism... | \$18.1 |
| Fiscal year 2007 budget from the General Fund, in millions | \$435.47 |
| Number of staff | 4,096 |
| Facilities operated | 10 |
| Year first territorial prison was established at Stillwater | 1853 |
| Of the 9,010 adult inmates on July 1, 2006, number sentenced to life without possibility of parole..... | 35 |
| Number sentenced to life with possibility of parole..... | 415 |
| Level 3 sex offenders under supervision in Minnesota communities, as of July 1, 2006 ... | 50 |

Sources: [Department of Corrections, including Performance Report Fiscal Year 2006, January 2007; FOCUS on Strategic Planning July 2004-December 2006, March 2005, and An Outcome Evaluation of the Challenge Incarceration Program, October 2006.](#)

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SESSION WEEKLY



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MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 10 • MARCH 9, 2007

MOVING STATE ROADS INTO FORWARD GEAR
E-MAIL OVERLOAD
'DEAR GOD' AND 'AMEN'

HF1624- HF1890

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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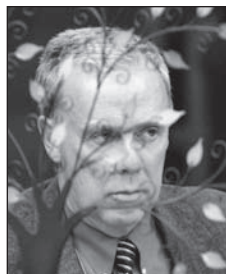
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On the cover: Ruth Shaugobay becomes emotional as she tells the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 5 how her 4-year-old daughter, Laela, left, went through a screen and fell four stories on June 16, 2006. The committee was hearing a bill that would require new residential dwellings to comply with window screen safety standards.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

'Dear God' and 'Amen'

Opening prayer in the Chamber must not offend any faith

BY SONJA HEGMAN

Invoicing the name Jesus Christ makes prayer denominational. This was part of a prayer debate three days into the 1999 session. The opening ceremony that year included a Catholic choir that sang "The Apostle's Creed." Seen as a highly Christian prayer song, several members were uncomfortable with its sectarian nature.

This was also the Rev. Lonnie Titus' first of eight years as House Chaplain. He recognized nondenominational prayer was a way to unite the members.

"It was an historical event," he said. "I had no idea it would lead such a discussion."

Former Rep. Betty McCollum (DFL-St. Paul) first offered an amendment to House Rules stating prayers should be nondenominational because it "respects the diversity of faiths in the chamber." It was later successfully amended by

former Rep. Peggy Leppik (R-Golden Valley) to read "a nondenominational prayer by the Chaplain that respects the religious diversity of the House," with the intent of allowing the word "God" and discouraging the use of "Jesus Christ."

Even though the language was eliminated the following year, Titus said the nondenominational concept remained. Now there is an understanding that chaplains must be sensitive to diversity in the House and recite

a general prayer, starting with "Dear God" and ending with "Amen." If the House Chaplain or visiting chaplain would acknowledge Jesus, Titus said a few representatives would ask for clarification of the guidelines.

Prayer has been a part of Minnesota House sessions since the state was a territory. The Rev. Mr. Parsons gave the prayer in the territory's first session on Sept. 3, 1849.

The words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954. "That's considered nondenominational," McCollum said.

But some members didn't agree that saying Jesus Christ was a problem.

Former Rep. Steve Dehler (R-St. Joseph) said the prayer rules were fine as they were.

"I would guess that the opening prayer song that we had the first day of session would not follow this new rule," he said. "That certainly wasn't nondenominational. It was beautiful and it was a prayer."

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) agreed that it was a beautiful prayer, but it still made him feel uncomfortable.

"It belonged in the church," he said. "It did not belong in this House of Representatives."

He said as a boy living in Duluth, his and three or four other Jewish children's parents would not allow them to participate in the school's Christmas program.

"We had to sit in an office with glass windows while the other kids walked by, pointing and laughing at us," he said. "We were ostracized for our religious beliefs. Yes, we're the minority – other Jewish members and other non-Christian members in this House. We're the minority in this House and a minority in this state of Minnesota. But the constitution in our state and the constitution of this country were designed to protect the minority. I cannot tell you how uncomfortable I felt opening night."

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the custom of legislative prayer draws its roots from both houses of British Parliament. In the United States, the custom has continued without interruption at the federal level since 1789 and for more than a century in many states. Almost all state legislatures still use an opening prayer as part of their tradition and procedure. But there is the question of whether prayers in the Chamber are a violation of the separation of



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Rep. Sondra Erickson bows her head in prayer as the Rev. Paul Rogers, House chaplain, gives the invocation prior to the March 7 House floor session.

First Reading continued on page 4

church and state.

In 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of legislative prayer, ruling that Congress and state legislatures do not

violate the separation of church and state even when clergy are paid to lead daily devotionals. In the Minnesota House, the elected chaplain is paid an honorarium of \$2,000 per year and \$35 for each day they give a prayer. Visiting chaplains are also paid \$35 for offering a

prayer. Chief Justice Warren Burger's opinion held that the use of legislative prayer "has become part of the fabric of our society" and that it is not "an establishment of religion or a step toward establishment; it is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs." 🙏

Spreading the Word

Rogers is new leader of 134-member congregation

By **SONJA HEGMAN**

As a young boy, the Rev. Paul Rogers was inspired to become a man of the cloth.

When he was 10, his mother was dying of cancer and his family's pastor visited regularly.

"He had a deep, kind of soothing voice," Rogers said. "The kind of care he provided was inspirational."

That pastor read Bible passages to Rogers' mother in Norwegian. She was born in Norway and at the end of her illness and before her death, she often wanted to speak her native tongue.

A couple of years later, a visiting pastor inspired him when talking about global missions. In high school, Rogers was influenced by another pastor who "preached great sermons."

The Lutheran minister served in churches in South Dakota, Europe and many rural and urban communities in Minnesota during his 37-year career. After six years as senior pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church at Augsburg College, Rogers retired in 2000 and served as an interim pastor at various churches with the Minneapolis/St. Paul Area synods until December 2006.

But he has a new job: he was elected House Chaplain Feb. 1.

"He brings sensitivity and understanding to this body," said [Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester), who nominated Rogers. "He understands the diversity of our religious sensitivity that exists in this body and throughout our state."

[House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) gathered names from a variety of her own contacts. A staff member at Rogers' bishop's office gave Kelliher his name, he said. Rogers then had interviews with Kelliher and Liebling.

Rogers was surprised he was chosen because after he'd been told his name was submitted, he was out of town for three weeks. "I assumed they didn't want to wait around."

A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rogers started his ministry in rural South Dakota, his home state, in 1969 and from there moved to congregations in southern Germany and Switzerland before returning to the Midwest.

One of the leaders of the Evangelical Church of Wurttemberg, a province in southern Germany, was in South Dakota for meetings, where Rogers had long conversations with him. Perhaps because of his German experience and fluency, the pastor suggested to his bishop that Rogers, whose undergraduate degree is in German, be invited as a guest pastor in a German congregation.

Rogers and his wife, Camille, had neither debts nor children, and were both a bit adventuresome, so, they accepted the invitation. Camille once hitchhiked with

two other women from Argentina to Peru, he said.

During his five years there, he was "loaned out" to the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland, for several weeks each year. Through that contact, Rogers was invited to return some years later to be on the staff before returning to South Dakota.

The Rogers settled in Minneapolis nine years ago. Rogers has been the non-staff coordinator for a partnership between the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Leipzig District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, Germany. They came to Minnesota because it was better for their 29-year-old developmentally disabled daughter, Elisabeth.

"She kind of fell through the cracks in South Dakota because the services she needed, just by chance, weren't available," Rogers said. "We had to seek a place that had what she needed."

That and the bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod invited him to come here.

As House Chaplain, Rogers won't do the opening prayer all the time, he said. Members submit names of persons to do that. With visiting chaplains, it's Rogers' job to welcome them to the whole issue of sensitivity to diversity issues.

Prayers have to be nondenominational, he said.

"That's a major challenge," he said. "There has to be a balance somehow of maintaining one's own integrity and being respectful of the diversity."

That diversity includes people who are of no faith community and people who think prayer is inappropriate, he said.

The second major area of the work is to be available for pastoral care, especially for members who are away from home during the week.

"It takes awhile to develop the kind of confidence one would need to talk to me when I'll be here for four months, but I'm available for that," he said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The Rev. Paul Rogers gives the invocation prior to the March 1 House floor session.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held March 1-8 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

BIOSCIENCE

Commercialization grants

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan) would provide \$10 million for bioscience business development and commercialization grants to help create new bioscience jobs in the state.

[HF1256](#) was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee March 7 and now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion, [SF1458](#), sponsored by [Sen. James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The bill would appropriate \$5 million a year for the next two fiscal years to the Department of Employment and Economic Development for grants to bioscience companies. Grant recipients would be selected by a 12-member committee consisting of representatives of state government, public and private higher education institutions, nonprofits and the bioscience business community.

Dale Wahlstrom, executive committee chairman of the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota, said that a recent statewide assessment of bioscience-related industries found that Minnesota had lost bioscience jobs between 1997 and 2002, and that most of the losses occurred in small businesses and startup companies.

Wahlstrom said the grant money would be targeted specifically at companies that are likely to create immediate, sustainable bioscience jobs that will stay in the state.

"All we're trying to do is pick a few very good ones that have a potential for nearly immediate job creation, so we can begin to turn around the job loss that we have experienced in this state in the last 10 years or so," he said.

He added that the state will make its money back in the form of tax revenues from the companies.

Some committee members expressed concern about giving state money to private companies. [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata) asked whether similar actions are being taken by other states, to which Wahlstrom replied with "an emphatic yes."

— N. BUSSE

Nanotechnology fund

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved a bill March 6 designed to allow small businesses greater access to nanotechnology — technology that allows scientists to manipulate materials on an atomic or molecular level.

[HF1637](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee), now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion, [SF1303](#), sponsored by [Sen. Julie Rosen](#) (R-Fairmont), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

The bill would establish a "nanotechnology development fund" through the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#) and appropriate more than \$1 million over two years. The department would use the money to provide one-to-one matching funds for small companies to buy or rent advanced nanoinstrumentation such as atomic microscopes.

Karen Arnold, chief financial officer for Nanocopoeia Inc., said her company manufactures nanoparticles of pharmaceutical drugs and nanoparticle coatings for medical devices — new technologies that she said could have huge benefits to the health care industry. She said her company has relied on grants to pay for access to necessary research equipment, but that other small nanotech companies don't have the same opportunity.

"One of the things that this bill does is allow access to other small companies that have not received that kind of grant support ... to have access to those very important facilities," Arnold said.

Beard said the bill focuses on companies with 50 employees or fewer, but that the department has the option of providing funds for companies with up to 100 employees. He said the department would have to report back to the Legislature every year on how the funds were allocated.

Also included in the bill is a provision that would allocate \$160,000 for a student internship program with the goal of expanding the number of researchers who are "experienced in working with existing nanotechnology applications."

— N. BUSSE

BONDING

Fixing up Fort Snelling

A bill that would help stabilize part of Minnesota's crumbling history was laid over by the House Capital Investment Finance

Division March 1 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Linda Slocum](#) (DFL-Richfield), [HF875](#) would provide \$500,000 for emergency building stabilization at Fort Snelling Upper Bluff. The buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, but they are among the most endangered historic places in America, Slocum said.

Patrick Connoy, Hennepin County economic development project coordinator, said the Fort Snelling Upper Post, owned by the Department of Natural Resources, contains 28 buildings, the Fort Snelling Golf Course and athletic fields on 141 acres of land. In the past year, it was named one of the 11 most endangered historic places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The buildings have poor roof conditions and some buildings have partially collapsed.

The Department of Natural Resources gave \$20,000 to stabilize the two buildings, and Hennepin County matched that with \$20,000 in Sentence-to-Serve labor.

The county is eligible for a \$150,000 Save America's Treasures federal grant from the National Park Service, but it requires a \$150,000 state match.

But Connoy said the allocation would not cover all that needs to be done. The requested \$500,000 would cover the grant match, and the remaining \$350,000 would be used for further stabilization.

[Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) said he didn't want to see \$500,000 spent if the buildings would not be used.

"We might as well throw \$500,000 into the river," he said. "Let's use it for something useful."

The bill was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF546](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington) awaits action by the Senate Economic Development Budget Division.

— S. HEGMAN

CONSUMERS

Full gift card valuation

A House division approved a bill that would ensure that the full value of a gift card could be used. Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF512](#) would prohibit the sale of a gift card that has an expiration date of less than two years or a service fee of any kind, including an inactivity fee. If there is an expiration date, it must be printed clearly

on the face of the card.

Approved March 2 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, the bill was scheduled to be heard March 8 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

"A gift card can either be a gift that keeps on giving or keeps on taking. Some cards now expire after six months, or they charge a monthly fee that can make the card's value almost zero in no time," Atkins said. "We live in a country where people expect to get what they paid for."

The bill would not apply to cards given to a consumer free of charge, prepaid calling cards, cards sold below face value or at a volume discount to employers, or sold to nonprofits for fundraising purposes. Nor would the bill address debit cards, such as those issued by malls that are actually bank debit cards subject to federal regulations.

Buzz Anderson, president of the Minnesota Retailers Association, said he knows of no store that would not accept an expired gift card, nor does he know of any association member retailers that charge an inactivity fee. "Consumers vote with their pocketbooks, and a bad experience likely means the loss of a customer."

The bill would also entitle the cardholder to cash back if the remaining value of the card is \$5 or less.

"The biggest boon to the retailer is unredeemed value," said Joseph Daly, a Hamline University law professor, who said 10 percent of gift card values are never redeemed. "Allegedly, right now, there is over \$100 billion out there in the merchant hands unredeemed."

A companion bill, [SF69](#), sponsored by [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— M. COOK

Poisonous plant warning

Some plants that have a place in landscape design could be fatal to pets, livestock and even children.

Take for instance the Japanese Yew, which is commonly used in landscaping around a home's foundation. According to the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association, an animal needs to eat only 0.10 percent of its body weight to receive a toxic dose.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) and [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), [HF255/SF138](#) calls for the commissioners of agriculture and health to evaluate the potential hazards posed by plants to consumers and livestock, and report their findings to the Legislature by March 1, 2008.

Bob Marg of Altura told the committee how two of his cows died after they each ate a twig from Japanese Yew trimmings, which he had piled up for disposal. He would like to see some type of consumer-warning label placed on plants that may be poisonous.

"I've been told there are as many as 120 plants that have some degree of poisonous," he said. "I do believe that people should know."

Approved March 5 by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee, the bill now moves to the House Finance Committee.

It was approved the Senate 63-0 Feb. 7.

— L. SCHUTZ

Vehicle protection warranties

More than 14,000 motor vehicle thefts were reported in Minnesota in 2005, at an estimated value of \$88 million.

As a result, anti-theft mechanisms, such as alarm systems, ignition disablers, steering wheel locks, radio or satellite tracking systems and glass etching, are becoming more popular, especially as aftermarket add-ons.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF933](#) seeks to ensure that purchasers are sold what they are promised.

Approved March 2 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, the bill was scheduled to be heard March 8 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Under the bill, product warrantors would register with the state and demonstrate their ability to financially cover their warranty obligations, either through a reimbursement insurance policy or they must have a net worth of at least \$50 million. They must also provide disclaimers and claim procedures in warranty agreements.

"The financial responsibility requirements, disclosures and disclaimers will significantly protect consumers who purchase these products," Tillberry said.

State statute mandates a 5 percent premium reduction for certain anti-theft devices on automobiles, said Paul Cassidy, government relations director for Leonard, Street and Deinard, and representing the National Vehicle Protection Association, which supports the bill.

"The problem covered by this legislation is anti-theft products with warranties that typically provide up to \$5,000 in coverage in the event the product that you purchased fails to prevent your car from being stolen. ... This will provide auto dealers with the assurance that they are selling a viable product, backed by a company with a financial viability to stand behind their warranty and pay their claims in the event of a loss," he said.

Sixteen states have passed similar legislation,

and it is pending in a number of others.

"Items can still be sold without any kind of warranty. This bill simply says that if you make a warranty claim you must be able to stand behind it," Cassidy said.

A companion bill, [SF128](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— M. COOK

CRIME

Internet controls

While the Internet can be a tool for research and communication, it can also be used to legally harass and defame.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF505](#) would change the definition of harassment to include some actions taken over the Internet.

The bill was laid over March 1 by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

Under current statute, harassment is defined as "a single incident of physical or sexual assault or repeated incidents of intrusion or unwanted acts, words or gestures."

According to Assistant Attorney General Al Zdrazil, one posting on a Web site, regardless of its length or breadth, would serve as a single incident and not fit the description of harassment. This bill would add a single posting to the definition, Zdrazil said.

The legislation would also allow for restraining orders against the computer networks that publish the information.

A companion bill, [SF645](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

DEVELOPMENT

Inventor assistance

Who hasn't dreamt of having a million-dollar idea?

The Minnesota Inventors Congress helps those that do more than dream. They help product developers find information to protect their intellectual property; identify companies with an interest in the product; and help find assistance for spending money wisely to promote and develop the product. They also hold an annual invention convention every year.

"I help educate inventors about the process, and take them through the stages and provide a sounding board to help them," said Executive Director Deb Hess, who has been with the organization for 22 years, first as a volunteer.

Sponsored by [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), [HF519](#) would appropriate \$85,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

The bill was laid over March 6 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Seifert said the request is “basically a supplement” to the \$60,000 that is in the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#) base budget. Of the requested amount, \$10,000 each year must be used for the Student Inventors Congress.

Hess said she is the lone full-time staff person, but needs more assistance. Nearly 2,000 inventors were served in fiscal year 2006, and more than 3,400 contacts were made with students, outside resources or businesses. She said it isn’t uncommon for people to call the office for more than a day before not receiving a busy signal.

A companion bill, [SF364](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dennis Frederickson](#) (R-New Ulm), was laid over Feb. 28 by the Senate Economic Development Budget Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— M. COOK

EDUCATION

Age limit may rise for diploma

The Minnesota school funding formula provides general education aid to schools for students up to age 21 who are working toward their high school diploma.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF987](#) would expand, by the year 2010, the maximum age to 23 if certain requirements are met by the student. The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over Feb. 28 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The stipulations are the student must speak limited English or has limited English proficiency, has received less than eight years of public education beginning at age 5, has not completed the requirements of a high school diploma and will graduate by age 23.

Carmen Pacheco, a student at the International Academy in St. Paul made an impassioned plea to the committee to approve the bill so she could continue her education. “For a better life, we need a better job. With the opportunity to graduate, we will take advantage of it.”

Most students over age 20 now attending alternative schools are recent immigrants that want to earn their diploma, but most will be too old and must leave the program before they can graduate.

“I want to be a productive citizen who wants

to work here,” said Asha Mohammed, student body president at the Wellstone International High School in Minneapolis.

A companion bill, [SF853](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), was laid over March 6 by the Senate E-12 Education Budget division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

— S. HARDING

Family-provided daycare

Family, friends and neighbors provide 70 percent of family daycare in Minnesota each year.

[HF796](#) sponsored by [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would establish a grant program that would help providers promote early literacy, healthy development and school readiness.

Approved March 6 by the House E-12 Education Committee, the bill next goes to

the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division.

Less than 20 percent of the family providers have little to no formal training in early child development; however, 46 percent of Minnesota families use this as their primary child care provider, and 24 percent use it exclusively, Murphy said.

“Passage of this legislation would put Minnesota at the leading edge of the nation at efforts for training opportunities for FFN caregivers,” she said.

Under the bill, the human services commissioner would make grants to community-based organizations, nonprofits and American Indian tribes working with FFN caregivers to provide training, support and resources to improve and promote children’s health, safety, nutrition and school readiness.

Grants would also be awarded to Minnesota

SNOW DOME



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

A March 1 winter storm flocks the Capitol dome with approximately 12 inches of new snow.

and regional library systems to implement early literacy programs in low-income communities. The grants would go to bookmobiles and read-mobiles, translations of early childhood books and literacy training in native languages, and family literacy activities.

The bill does not specify a total cost for the program.

[Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton) asked why this bill is necessary. “Don’t our care-providers already have care networks?”

Murphy said this is just an opportunity to improve the networks.

A companion bill, [SF686](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

High Five

Teachers could be possibly slapping hands with 4-year-olds entering the High Five kindergarten program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope), [HF1325](#) would allow school districts to offer the High Five program.

“High Five boosts school readiness skills for poor, high-needs children,” said Annie Pearson, an early education teacher in the Minneapolis School District. Children attend either morning or afternoon sessions five days a week.

Under the bill, the programs would need to provide instructional content and activities that are of sufficient length and intensity to address learning needs; have class sizes of less than 20 children and child staff ratios of 10:1 or less; and have compensatory instruction that accelerates children’s language, literacy skills and mathematical thinking.

A child could participate in the program if they are 4 years old on Sept. 1, have completed the developmental screening process, qualify for free and reduced lunch, and is an English language learner.

School districts participating in the program would be able to count the new students as kindergartners and would receive .557 per pupil unit of state funding. The cost for this program is unspecified in the bill.

On March 6, the House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF1374](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Ice arena operating costs

In “The State of Hockey,” 10 school districts operate and maintain their own ice arenas.

Under current law, those districts can levy 90 percent of the net actual cost of ice arena

operation. Arenas also charge for open ice time and concessions to cover operating expenses.

[Rep. Leon Lillie](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), sponsor of [HF112](#), would like to see the levy amount increased to 100 percent.

The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over March 1 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Lillie said the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District failed to pass its most recent levy request. “We have had to cut \$15 million; we have to count every penny, and that’s what this bill is about,” he said.

The district’s cost for operating its two arenas is \$6,647. The bill would save the district \$664.

If the levy were increased to 100 percent, the 10 districts combined would save \$100,000.

A companion bill, [SF12](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

More library funding

Libraries across the state have had to trim hours, staff or both to meet budget cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003.

“Minnesota currently allocates \$8.57 million per year for libraries, the same amount that was in 1992,” according to Chris Olson, executive director of the Metropolitan Library Service Agency. A new bill would raise appropriations by \$5 million a year.

[HF319](#), sponsored by [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls), would appropriate a \$13.57 million grant for fiscal year 2008 and again in 2009 for the state’s 12 regional library systems. Multi-county, multi-type library systems would see a grant of \$1.3 million for fiscal years 2008 and 2009, a \$400,000 increase over current allocations.

The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over March 1 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The increased funding for the service systems would go toward books and collections, interlibrary loans, updating shared electronic databases, bookmobiles and continuing education and staff training, among other things.

Supporters cite Minneapolis as an example of what reduced funding has meant to a community. According to a handout from the Minnesota Library Association; in 2004, library hours were cut, the material budgets were reduced and nearly 30 percent of the staff were laid off. Earlier this year, Webber Park, Southeast and Roosevelt libraries were closed, and all other libraries, including the new downtown library, are now only open five days a week.

A companion bill, [SF623](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

TEACH

Scholarships up to \$5,000 per year could be awarded for courses leading to child development associate credentials, and associate or bachelor degrees in early child development and school-age care.

[HF814](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield), would establish the Teacher Education and Compensation Help program. Grants would provide scholarships, education incentives and an early childhood retention program for early childhood teachers. However, no specific funding is requested.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 6 and referred it to the House Finance Committee.

TEACH was formed to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover in the early childhood workforce, according to its Web site.

The program’s goals are to provide scholarships for people working in regulated child care centers and family care homes, to encourage child care programs to support the continuing education of their staff, and to provide increased compensation that is directly related to increased education.

Ann Kaner Roth of Minneapolis, an early education teacher, said that most early child care providers receive “the same pay as a dishwasher.”

The retention program incentives range from \$1,000 to \$3,500 annually, based on education.

Among the eligibility requirements, an applicant must be employed by a licensed early childhood or child care provider and be working with children. The employee may also be working at a licensed family child care provider or at a school-age program operated by a license-exempt public program.

A companion bill, [SF770](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), was held over March 6 by the Senate Higher Education Budget and Policy Division for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

— S. HARDING

Teacher development

Minnesota teachers pursue their master’s degrees as a way to continue receiving credits to renew their licensure, getting a raise and becoming a better educator.

[Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope) sponsors [HF412](#) that would award grants to teachers participating in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The

House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 1. It awaits action by the House K-12 Finance Division.

NBPTS was established in 1987 to develop professional standards for accomplished teaching, create a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrate certified teachers into educational reform efforts.

The problem is that only a handful of districts offer compensation for going through this process, but not as much as someone who earns a master's degree. Nor do the credits count towards a pay raise.

Teachers accepted as candidates would receive a \$1,000 grant. Once certified, the teacher would receive a \$3,000 grant, and would receive another \$2,000 grant for their 10-year renewal of the certification.

Although no fiscal note was provided, Peterson indicated \$100,000 would be needed to pay for one coordinator and three facilitators who assist and support certification applicants. Money also would be used for program costs, travel expenses, meetings, supplies and Web maintenance.

Currently, there is a \$2,500 assessment fee to get into the program.

[Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) asked why a teacher would want to go through this process instead of obtaining a master's degree.

"This process meant more to the practical teaching process than a master's degree," said Sharon Kjellberg, a teacher in the Mounds View School District. "This program is relevant for what you do in your classroom today."

A companion bill, [SF319](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), was scheduled to be heard March 8 by the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division.

— S. HARDING

Teachers of diverse backgrounds

Of the approximately 10,000 potential teachers educated in 2005-06 at postsecondary schools in Minnesota, only 5 percent were of color, which demographically does not match up with the increasing number of students of color.

"In the state, 20 percent of students are of color and 70 percent of Minneapolis students are of color," said Paul Spies, the parent of two North Minneapolis students.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) would appropriate \$1.3 million for the 2008-09 biennium for the collaborative urban educator recruitment and training programs at three St. Paul universities. The trio last received that much state funding in the 2000-01 biennium. Currently, it receives \$528,000 annually.

Supporters of [HF1186](#) say that with extra

funding, more teachers of color could be recruited and retained for schools with diverse racial backgrounds.

The House Disparities in Students and Services Subcommittee approved the bill March 5 and referred it to the House K-12 Finance Division.

Concordia University would receive \$500,000 each year for the Southeast Asian Teacher program, the University of St. Thomas would receive \$400,000 each year for the collaborative urban educator program and Hamline University would receive \$400,000 each year for the Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching.

A companion bill, [SF894](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), was laid over March 6 by the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division.

— S. HARDING

ELECTIONS

Election judge party affiliation

Election judges would not have to affiliate with a major political party, under a bill approved March 6 by the House Governmental Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carol McFarlane](#) (R-White Bear Lake), [HF965](#) would also remove the requirement that the list of major party affiliated individuals be exhausted before a precinct appoints individuals who meet the qualifications to serve as an election judge. This bill also specifies that at least two election judges per precinct be affiliated with different major political parties.

Under current law, designated county or district chairs for each major political party submit lists of eligible voters to act as election judges in their designated area. Appointments are then made from the list. However, if no list is submitted or all names have been used, any other individual meeting necessary qualifications may be appointed to serve.

A constituent who had been an election judge in 2004 was not able to be an election judge in 2006 because of changes made in law last year, McFarlane said.

Under the bill, township elections would have the requirement of party balance of election judges removed completely.

Kent Sulem, attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships, said township elections that happen in March typically involve only one to two candidates and do not need balanced partisan judges. School districts have similar election laws, he said.

Ann Higgins, intergovernmental relations representative for the League of Minnesota

Cities, said the change would still maintain the political party balance at the polling place for all other elections, but would allow precincts the opportunity to go to a larger pool of qualified election judges, such as those not affiliated with a major political party. As election judges are getting older, finding replacements is becoming more difficult, she said.

There was no opposition and the bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF753](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Rummel](#) (DFL-White Bear Lake), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Caucus, primary month changes

The state primary election would be moved from September to June, under a bill approved March 7 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), [HF1117](#) would also move the precinct caucuses from March to February. Both changes would take effect in 2010. The bill's next stop is the House floor.

Simon disagrees with opponents who say the change would extend the length of the campaign season. Instead, Simon says, it would adjust the time candidates can campaign for the state seat rather than against others vying for the same party endorsement.

In the case of a contested September primary, candidates now spend "a lot more time talking about who's the best Democrat or who's the best Republican," and not enough time discussing who's the best candidate, Simon said.

Annette Meeks, who co-chairs the Council for Electoral Leadership, said the change would mean "cleaner, more issue-driven elections" rather than shorter and meaner ones. The time allows discourse on issues rather than throwing "torpedoes" at other candidates.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague), a cosponsor of the bill, unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have changed the primary date from June to August to give counties more time to manage the election process.

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) said moving the primary to June would make it more difficult for those holding legislative offices to run for another state office, because members are typically at the end of session. Moving the party endorsement process to February also puts them in the middle of session, thereby raising myriad conflicts, he said.

Simon agreed the conflicts could be troubling for those in that situation, and the bill doesn't make life easy for ambitious state legislators. "But I guess that's one of the risks one has to weigh when one runs for higher office when they're already holding an office," Simon said.

A companion bill, [SF893](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

—P. OSTBERG

Getting more people to the polls

People registering on Election Day may be able to use lease agreements to help prove their residency, under a bill approved March 6 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [HF1223](#) would modify the voter registration process.

Under current law, a voter wanting to register on Election Day must document a proof of residency, which can include a driver's license or state identification card with the current address or photo identification along with a current utility bill. The bill would add lease agreements and wireless telephone bills as forms of utility bills.

The bill would also require public and certain private postsecondary institutions to submit a list of current students enrolled in the institution with the most recent residency address of the student to the [Office of the Secretary of State](#). The office would submit the list at least 14 days prior to the state or city general election to the appropriate county auditor.

Voters are finding barriers in trying to participate in the political process, said Scott Cooper, representing the Minnesota Voting Rights Coalition.

Under the bill, employees of a residential facility, such as homeless and battered women's shelters, could vouch for residents of a facility on Election Day to help prove residency. This is a specific concern brought to the coalition, Cooper said.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said using a lease as a form of a utility bill does not prove a person has residency.

"We believe it proves residency as well as a utility bill does," Cooper said. The person is still registering on Election Day and committing a crime if they are doing that dishonestly, he said.

Hilty said expanding the definition of utility bill helps renters whose landlords pay utility costs resulting in some not having a utility bill to prove residency.

The bill now goes to the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division.

A companion bill, [SF954](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

—P. OSTBERG

EMPLOYMENT

A load off the back

A 2004 report from the Department of Labor and Industry indicated that nursing assistants ranked second, registered nurses seventh and LPNs 12th among occupations where injuries occur.

Backs bear the most burden because providers are required to lift patients manually, said Elizabeth Shogren, a registered nurse.

[Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault) is sponsoring the "Safe Patient Handling Act" to provide relief.

The bill, [HF712](#), would require all licensed health care facilities to implement a program that would establish committees, buy equipment, provide staff training and offer annual evaluations to ensure safe handling of patients. An appropriation of \$2 million would be provided each year until fiscal year 2010 to help moderate costs.

Approved March 1 by the House Health and Human Services Committee, the bill was referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

"The data is so clear: Everyday we go to work we risk serious injury because we do not have the appropriate equipment to move patients effectively," said Stacy Lundquist, a registered nurse who suffered a career-ending back injury on the job.

She and proponents argued that the body mechanics encouraged with manual lifting do not help prevent injury regardless of the patient's weight.

"The danger in relying in techniques is that it provides a false sense of security," Shogren said.

They said the proposed program would ultimately reduce costs for facilities by eliminating the injuries, and therefore insurance claims.

This did not assuage opponents' concerns.

"Even if there is an eventual return of investment, there is an initial cash outlay that will be difficult for some facilities to do," said John Lips, director of legal affairs for Care Providers of Minnesota, a long-term care organization.

A companion bill, [SF828](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), is scheduled to be heard March 9 by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

—M. SIMPSON

ENERGY

Geothermal investment loans

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) aims to help local governments invest in geothermal heating and cooling systems—technology that utilizes the constant temperature of the earth rather than gas to heat and cool buildings.

[HF1098](#) would establish a revolving loan program through the [Department of Commerce](#) for the installation of these systems in city and county buildings.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over March 2 for possible inclusion in an unspecified future omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF904](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls) awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The bill would provide loans only for projects that have been proven "economically feasible" and that can ensure "proper and efficient operation" of a facility. The maximum loan term is 10 years, and before being approved, a municipality must adopt a resolution to collect sufficient revenues to pay the loan back.

Peterson said he was not yet sure what interest rates, if any, would apply to the loans. He said the issue would be worked on as the legislation progresses.

Craig Johnson, intergovernmental relations representative for the League of Minnesota Cities, praised the bill as an opportunity for local governments to use new technologies when and where they see fit.

"It allows a community that has already made the decision to go forward with renewable energy—in this case, geothermal—to have a state resource where they can help finance that at potentially a much better rate than they could otherwise achieve if they were to do it on their own."

[Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids) successfully amended the bill to make its provisions apply to solar-thermal heating and cooling technology as well as geothermal.

—N. BUSSE

Energy conservation

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) would require Minnesota's gas and electric utility companies to set a more aggressive energy conservation goal.

[HF1221](#) would establish a goal of 1.5 percent of gross retail sales for all gas and electric companies in the state. It was approved March 7 by the House Energy Finance and Policy Division and now goes to the House Finance Committee.

The bill represents an expansion of the state's current conservation improvement program,

which directs utilities to invest money in programs and initiatives that encourage energy conservation among their customers.

Kalin called the 1.5 percent goal both “aggressive” and “doable.” Representatives of utility companies, however, said they would have a tough time meeting it, and that it might result in higher gas and electric prices.

Mike Bash, chief financial officer of Connexus Energy, said it didn’t make sense to put the onus for energy conservation on the utility companies when customers are responsible for gas and electric demand.

“We’re not at our customers’ shoulder when they’re at Best Buy buying that new plasma TV. We’re not at their shoulder when they’re at the hardware store deciding which light bulb to buy. We’re not there with their builder at their new home deciding what appliances to put in,” Bash said, adding that his company will have to raise its rates anywhere from 6 percent to 10 percent if the bill passes.

Sheldon Strom, executive director of the Center for Energy and the Environment, disputed the notion that the bill would increase energy prices, arguing that having to build new power plants to meet energy demands would be much more expensive than conservation.

“Saving energy is so much less expensive than producing new energy supplies,” he said.

A companion bill, [SF997](#), sponsored by [Sen. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), was scheduled to be heard March 8 by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— N. BUSSE

ENVIRONMENT

Global Warming Mitigation Act

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) aims to make Minnesota do its part to curb global warming, but critics say it could negatively impact the state’s power companies and consumers.

[HF375](#) would enact the Global Warming Mitigation Act of 2007. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill March 6. It now goes to the House Energy Finance and Policy Division.

The bill would implement a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emissions, whereby aggregate carbon emissions from power plants would be limited, and companies given “allowances” of emissions that they could trade with one another. The goal would be to reduce emissions to 45 percent below the 2005 levels by 2025.

A section of the bill that would forbid the



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Brita Sailer watches a committee room monitor during a March 1 presentation to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee on global warming by Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy for the Union of Concerned Scientists.

construction of any new carbon-emitting power plants until the cap-and-trade system is implemented — a process Ruud said could take “a couple of years” — emerged as the most controversial provision. Critics said it could stall plans to build new coal-fired power plants that are necessary to meet the state’s growing demand for electricity.

“I believe there’s a way to solve the global warming problem and keep the lights on at the same time,” said Rick Lancaster, vice president of generation for Great River Energy.

Ruud replied that global warming is an urgent problem, and that power companies have an obligation to figure out for themselves how to meet electricity demands without increasing emissions.

That answer wasn’t good enough for [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) or the committee chair, [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley). Both tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill to allow greater flexibility to the power companies.

“I just wonder who’s going to get browned-out first. Is it going to be the power-glutton pigs that continue to expand their communities or is it going to be the rural people who have one farm light on out in the barnyard?” Dill said.

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) said

he supports efforts to reduce global warming, but warned that the bill in its current form amounts to “knee-jerking” that would cost the state construction jobs and risk power outages.

“I want to do all these things. I want us to go in this direction. But why do we all-of-a-sudden have to start putting people out of work and turn around on a dime? I don’t understand that,” he said. “If we were going to resolve this just within Minnesota, I would have a different attitude.”

A companion bill, [SF192](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Conservation corps funding

The Minnesota Conservation Corps, an organization that educates and employs Minnesota youth to help manage the state’s natural resources, would get a funding boost under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton).

[HF538](#) would appropriate \$2.29 million per year to the corps over the next two fiscal years. The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division laid the bill over March 6 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF395](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Peterson said the bill represents a \$1.2 million per year funding increase over what is currently recommended in Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s proposed budget. He added that the MCC can leverage an additional \$2 for every \$1 the state provides.

Len Price, MCC executive director, said the additional funds will allow the MCC to expand its conservation activities.

“The more dollars that we can get from the state, the more we can go out and leverage — and really, the more corps members that we can put in the field to have this experience,” Price said.

Sara Wourinen, a 17-year-old MCC Summer Youth Program participant, called the corps the best thing that has ever happened to her.

“I really enjoy working with the Minnesota Conservation Corps. It’s taught me so much about who I am, about life and work ethics and working with different people,” Wourinen said.

[Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) praised the MCC and said it provided “the best bang for the buck” of any conservation program in the state.

— N. BUSSE

FAMILY

Combating domestic violence

In 2004, there were 15,000 cases of domestic violence reported in St. Paul. That equals almost 300 cases a week and 40 cases a day.

[Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is sponsoring a bill to help address the problem.

[HF1311](#) proposes a one-time \$500,000 appropriation to St. Paul to create an integrated framework to develop policies, procedures and quality assurance for domestic violence responses from law enforcement agencies. Once established, the program could be a blueprint for similar programs throughout the state.

The House Public Safety Finance Division laid the bill over March 1 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

St. Paul Chief of Police John Harrington said that having different agencies work together and share resources is crucial. Cops alone cannot stop domestic violence. Harrington said what works is a collaborative effort.

St. Paul Domestic Intervention Project Executive Director Shelley Johnson Cline said the framework would also address domestic violence issues within the diverse populations of St. Paul.

One of the greatest values of this bill, Lesch said, is the many different individuals and agencies that would be brought together to make this happen.

A companion bill, [SF1159](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), was laid over Feb. 28 by the Senate Public Safety Budget Division.

— C. GREEN

GOVERNMENT

Notaries public fees

Fees charged by notaries could be raised, under a bill approved by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee March 1.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF144/SF463](#) would raise the fee up to 5 percent of the \$100 fee paid every five years by notaries for their license to perform the service. Currently, notaries can charge up to \$1.

The increase would help offset the increase to the notary-licensing fee made several years ago, said Lona Schreiber, Anoka County intergovernmental coordinator.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said the increase goes beyond the amount needed to offset the notaries' licensing fee.

"This isn't at all going to be a moneymaker," Schreiber said. There are several people in

SHADE SUPPORT

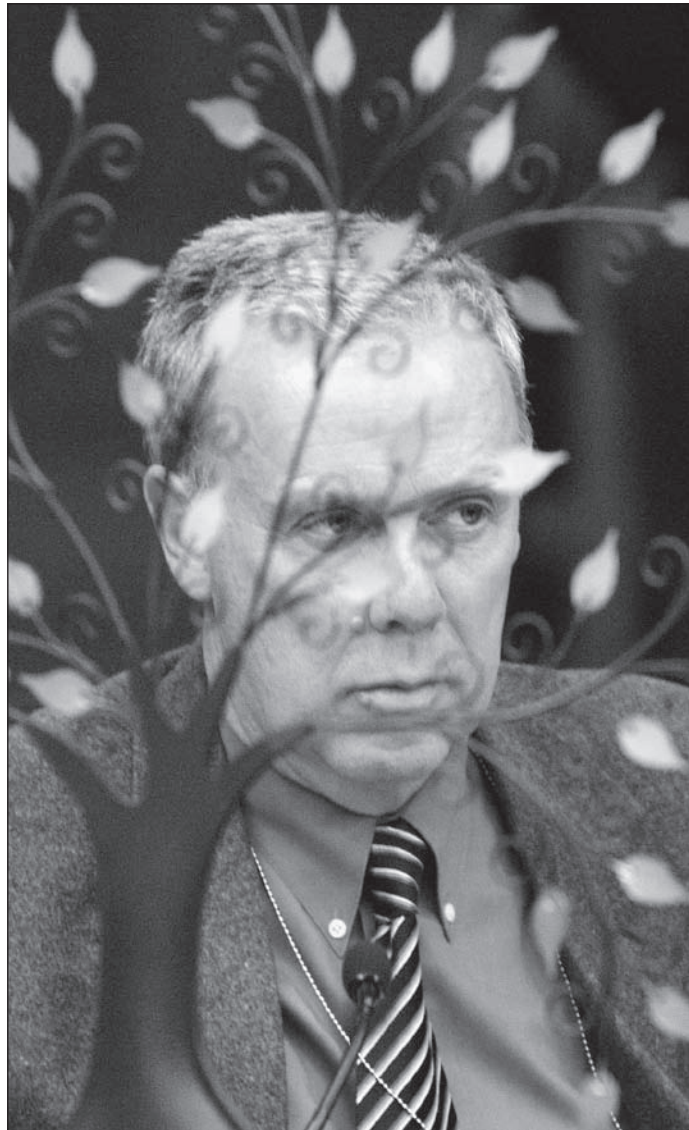


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Robert Tomlinson, assistant director with the Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry, testifies March 5 before the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division in support of a bill that would provide forest and shade tree pest control.

an office that are licensed notaries, she said, adding that the cost to maintain those every five years is substantial.

The bill now goes to the House State Government Finance Division.

The Senate passed the bill 58-7 Feb. 21.

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Preventing lead contamination

The Lead Poisoning Prevention Act seeks to do as it says: prevent lead poisoning, specifically in children.

Members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division

agreed March 6 to consider the legislation for its omnibus bill, after adopting an oral amendment to ease a provision on landlords.

[Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsors [HF695](#), which she said would make the process of testing, reporting and assessing lead contamination easier, quicker, more affordable and more forthcoming. The result, she believes, is cost savings across the board.

"I just think this is such a good investment in our kids," Clark said. "These are children who lose neurological function ... they can't learn; they get into trouble. These are the kids who drop out of school ... and there's a disproportionate number in the criminal justice system."

The bill would allow for filter paper use in

the testing of lead in blood, which is faster than methods currently approved. It also lowers the threshold — from 15 to 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter — of reportable contamination and would require risk assessments earlier and at lower thresholds for children and pregnant women.

It would also affect the state's medical assistance program by requiring that it cover risk assessments and environmental investigations.

Some committee members took issue with a final provision that would force landlords to test properties built before 1978 for lead prior to rental and to disclose the results.

"We're penalizing landlords across the board," [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) said. "I think that this has more economic implications than these landlords should bear."

Jack Horner, general counsel for the Minnesota Multi Housing Association, argued that current requirements that require certain landlords to distribute an informational brochure are satisfactory enough.

"Both in federal law and state law, we simply assume that pre-1978 housing has lead dust in it," he said. "It's an assumption we disclose."

Members ultimately adopted an amendment that would still force landlords to test, but wouldn't require it more than once a year or if a property had already tested positive.

A companion bill, [SF1015](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), is scheduled to be heard March 12 by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Finding hearing loss

House Speaker [Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) said she sponsored [HF1206](#) because of her daughter's experience.

"At some point, she was deaf," she told members of the House Health and Human Services Committee March 6 as she described the resulting speech delays her daughter incurred. "I have a special place for this issue."

HF1206 would require universal newborn hearing and infant screening programs in all hospitals statewide, and services for hard-of-hearing children.

The bill would also oblige hospitals to inform parents if their child is diagnosed with a hearing loss, a practice that testifiers said has been neglected by some providers.

"Hearing loss occurs more frequently than any other condition tested for," said Dr. Karl White, the founding director of the National Center for Hearing Disease and Management. "Minnesota screens 80 percent of children, but there's often no follow up."

"The average deaf adult in the United States reads at a fourth-grade level," he said. "But



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Trent Brown testifies with his 6-month-old daughter, Linnea, before the House Health and Human Services Committee March 6 in support of the Universal Newborn and Infant Hearing Screening Act.

those children diagnosed with hearing loss before 6 months of age are achieving on an age level with their peers."

The bill was approved and referred to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. Its companion, [SF1095](#) sponsored by [Rep. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Assistance for people with disabilities

Assistive technology allows people with disabilities to lead independent lives by assisting with communication, mobility, play and other activities that, by design, may be difficult for some.

Sponsored by [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley), [HF725](#) would support further development of this technology by funding supportive services, helping finance a grant and facilitating a study to determine whether people with disabilities and the elderly are getting everything they need.

"This levels the playing ground," said Judy Moening, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota.

The House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division held over the \$700,000 request March 6 for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

The \$200,000 in grant funding would help satisfy federal match dollars that will ultimately launch a low-interest loan program for people seeking this equipment.

Proponents say the funding can't wait.

"We have no time," said Carol Fury, executive director of Assistive Technology of Minnesota. "If we send this money back, we will never see it again."

Fury said information gained from a study, which is expected to cost \$200,000, would help advance the system currently in place for the product.

[Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) sponsors [SF639](#), the bill's companion. It awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

HIGHER EDUCATION

Remote learning

In the hundreds of millions of dollars projected to be spent by the state on higher education in the upcoming biennium, \$120,000 may seem like a drop in the bucket.

But the amount could help residents along Lake Superior and the state's Arrowhead Region, where a person often has to drive more than two hours to attend a college class.

That is where the nonprofit [Cook County Higher Education](#) comes in.

From a site in Grand Marais, students can partake in a real-time classroom experience via interactive television or can take traditional courses online or through other technological means.

"This provides an opportunity for people to obtain their degree and get their training without having to leave the community," said Paula Sundet, program director. "In essence we're brokering programs that the colleges and universities in the area have."

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), [HF358](#) would appropriate \$120,000 in the 2008-09 biennium to the program, a \$40,000 increase over current base level funding administered through the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. The \$80,000 base has been in place since the 2000-01 biennium.

"We need the additional money so we can expand some of the programming that we are currently doing," Sundet said. Overall, the program has seen a 112 percent increase in

participation in the past year.

The bill was laid over March 6 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF313](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), was laid over March 6 by the Senate Higher Education Budget and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— M. COOK

Car owners get hit with tickets

If your car is involved in a hit-and-run crash, you could be found guilty of a misdemeanor. Even if you're not driving.

Current law says that if a driver fails to stop, provide information or submit an accident report, he or she could face charges. [HF1166](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), would make it a petty misdemeanor for vehicle owners or lessees whose vehicle is involved in a hit-and-run.

The bill was laid over by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee March 1 for possible inclusion in an upcoming omnibus bill.

Lt. Jim Mortenson of the St. Cloud Police Department said that the bill is a tool that can be used when the owner won't cooperate with police.

[Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) said the bill puts law-abiding citizens in a difficult position. While law enforcement officers are required to prove cases on their own, citizens are under no obligation to talk to the authorities about anything. The bill would force someone to talk or get a ticket, Kohls said.

A companion bill, [SF447](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), was laid over March 7 by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Elections proposed for Met Council

In 1967, the Legislature created the [Metropolitan Council](#) "to coordinate the planning and development of the metropolitan area." The council serves Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties, providing support and services for transportation, wastewater treatment, regional parks and housing.

The 17 members of the council are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor, but a bill sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), would change that.

[HF312](#) proposes putting these appointments in the hands of voters by 2008, with council members serving four-year terms, staggered

so that one-half of the membership is elected every two years.

Myron Orfield (DFL-Mpls), who spent five terms in the House and one in the Senate, said that with its budget of over \$600 million, the council is the third largest entity in the state behind the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County. He argued that with such broad local government authority, there must be accountability. It is unprecedented for a body with this much power not to be elected, Orfield said.

Peter Bell, chairman of the council, said support for the council is "broader and deeper than it has ever been." He listed some of the council's major accomplishments, including the Hiawatha light-rail transit line, the North Star commuter rail system and operating an award-winning wastewater treatment system.

Bell said that if the members are elected, the council would lose its regional focus, become less accessible to the governor and the Legislature, and lose its racial and gender diversity.

"Never does the cliché 'If it's not broke, don't fix it,' apply more than now," Bell said.

Approved by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee March 5, the bill's next stop is the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

A companion bill, [SF81](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action by the full Senate.

— C. GREEN

MILITARY

GI bill promise

Military recruiters promote education benefits as part of the package for a person enlisting in the National Guard and reserve units. However, not all reservists are eligible for the benefits provided under the [Montgomery GI Bill for the Selected Reserve](#).

This is a form of "bait and switch," [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) told the House Veterans Affairs Division March 2.

His bill, [HF903](#), would let Congress and the president know by resolution about the state's desire to have the benefits applied as advertised by recruiters. The division approved the bill and referred it to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

The Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve does not adequately address the changeover to an all-volunteer force, where reservists are called up and discharged multiple times, possibly making them ineligible for the education benefit, Severson said.

A companion bill, [SF590](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), awaits

action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

SAFETY

Defibrillators for all

When law enforcement agencies answer emergency 911 calls, they occasionally encounter situations where they must assist heart attack victims.

The most effective treatment for cardiac arrest is a combination of CPR and electric shock to the heart, usually provided by a defibrillator. However, many law enforcement agencies do not have the defibrillators for transport.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd), [HF687](#) would appropriate \$200,000 to help law enforcement agencies outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area purchase defibrillators, and create a working group to make recommendations for awarding grants to buy the new equipment.

The House Public Safety Finance Division held the bill over March 1 for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Buck McAlpin, president of the Minnesota Ambulance Association, said that in some rural areas, it can take an ambulance 45 minutes to respond to a call, where a squad car may be five blocks away.

A companion bill, [SF334](#), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), was laid over Feb. 21 by the Senate Public Safety Budget Division.

— C. GREEN

TAXES

More ambulance exemptions

Emergency vehicles used like ambulances could get the same tax exemptions if a bill heard March 6 in the House Taxes Committee passes.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), [HF1333](#) would expand tax exemptions to all emergency response vehicles owned by an ambulance service. These vehicles would be exempt from the motor vehicle registration tax even though they do not have the appearance of an ambulance. The repair and replacement parts for these vehicles would also be exempt from sales and use tax.

Currently, licensed and marked ambulances are exempt from the motor vehicle registration tax and the motor vehicle sales tax. If passed, the bill would take effect July 1. The cost to the state would be minimal.

The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. A companion bill,

[SF869](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), was laid over by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

Pet tax exemption

A bill that would exempt sales tax on certain pet sales was heard by the House Taxes Committee March 6.

Sponsored by [Rep. Pat Garofalo](#) (R-Farmington), [HF1152](#) would give nonprofit animal shelters sales tax exemptions on animal sales. To qualify for the exemption, the selling price of the animal cannot exceed reasonable costs in caring for the animal before the sale. The impact to the General Fund would be \$400,000 in fiscal year 2008 and \$480,000 by fiscal year 2011.

One organization that would benefit from the bill is Last Hope Inc. Started in 1985 as a nonprofit organization in Farmington dedicated to saving abandoned, unwanted and helpless dogs and cats, the organization has 200 volunteers and no paid staff. Any money raised from adoption fees goes to keep the animals healthy.

With two small dogs nearby, one of which was available for adoption, the organization's president, Bev Orr, said since its beginning, the organization has helped 30,000 animals find homes. In 2005, Last Hope paid about \$12,000 in sales tax. When an animal is adopted, sales tax is not figured into the fee. The state's 6.5 percent

sales tax is figured from the organization's gross receipts for the year.

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

— S. HEGMAN

Homestead credit change

A bill that would give 86 percent of homeowners in the state property tax relief was held over March 5 by the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division for possible inclusion in a division report.

Sponsored by [Rep. Denise Dittrich](#) (DFL-Champlin), [HF647](#) would increase the market value homestead credit for most homes, effective for taxes payable in 2008 and after.

The bill would index the market value at which the maximum homestead credit is received from \$304 at \$76,000 to \$332 at \$83,000; extend the point that the credit phase-out begins from \$76,000 to \$381,000; and change the phase-out rate from 0.09 percent, meaning the credit decreases by \$9 per \$10,000 of value, to 0.304 percent, meaning the credit declines by \$30.40 per \$10,000 of value.

"This will make a difference in people's budgets," Dittrich said.

Mary Anne Razim-Fitzsimons, a Coon Rapids resident, said the value of her house has increased \$142,000 in 10 years, including \$17,000 from 2006 to 2007.

A companion bill, [SF404](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), was held over March 5 by the Senate Property Tax Division for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

— S. HEGMAN

Online tax filing

Though Minnesota is No. 2 in the country in online tax filing, a bill heard by the House Taxes Committee and House State Government Finance Division March 5 would require the [Department of Revenue](#) to provide the service and implement a new program.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Benson](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), [HF843](#) would require the department to provide free online filing of individual income tax returns on its Web site. It would also direct the commissioner of revenue to implement a "ReadyReturn" program for individuals with simple income tax returns.

Under the program, the commissioner would complete returns for eligible taxpayers based on data in the commissioner's possession. Taxpayers would access their return on the department Web site or in paper form. Eligible taxpayers would then have the option of signing the return and filing it in lieu of completing an income tax return. Penalties for underpayment and failure to file would be waived for taxpayers using the program.

Carole Wald, the department's assistant commissioner for income tax, said the program, which is operating in California, has some issues. For one, when employers provide their tax information to the state, they don't do it electronically, meaning the information would not be available fast enough for the program.

"We would need more compliance by employers for it to work," she said.

She added that the "ReadyReturn" program would also make the department the auditor for those returns, which would also make the process difficult. It would also be unknown if a person was married in the previous year or something else changed in their tax status.

The bill was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF665](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

Toll-free tax line

Toll-free tax information lines would be required as part of a bill heard jointly by the House Taxes Committee and House State Government Finance Division March 5.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent), [HF1509](#) would make an appropriation for tax compliance initiatives and require the [Department of Revenue](#) to maintain a toll-free taxpayer assistance telephone service. It would also make changes consistent with recommendations in a [tax compliance report](#) prepared in March 2006 by the [Office of the Legislative Auditor](#) by: requiring the revenue commissioner to enter into an agreement with the Internal Revenue Service for the processing of electronically filed state returns; implementing electronic filing of employer withholding returns; requiring a study of the provision of sales and use tax forms; and providing telephone assistance to limited-English speakers.

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said the state already has five toll-free phone lines that are fully operational for tax questions, including (800) 652-9094. They are targeted to Greater Minnesota residents, but metro-area residents can call (651) 296-3781 with tax questions. Einess estimates the lines cost about \$95,000 per year to maintain.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

— S. HEGMAN



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Bev Orr, president of Last Hope Inc., holds 14-year-old Decker as she testifies March 6 before the House Taxes Committee. Rep. Pat Garofalo, holding Brittany, sponsors a bill that would make animal shelter pet sales exempt from sales tax.

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



Funding transportation needs

Ideas drive to put state back on the smooth, uncongested road

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Three separate bills would promote a comprehensive approach to addressing the state's transportation needs.

By Mike Cook

It is widely accepted that transportation funding has not kept up with the times.

Now three bills offer different ways of trying to get the state back on the road to better times.

Each was heard March 6 by the House Transportation Finance Committee, and held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus transportation finance bill.

"We all know what comes out of this committee is going to be a compilation of a number of elements from a bunch of different bills," said [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville).

Pawlenty plan

Sponsored by Holberg, [HF799](#) is the governor's transportation initiative.

It includes a one-time \$100 million transfer from the General Fund for state highways. Of that, \$95 million would supplement current state funding to keep the next three road construction seasons worth of projects on schedule, including the Highway 169/County Road 81 "Devil's Triangle" project in the northwest Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Holberg said the bill provides for a number of fee increases, including certificates of title, motorized bicycles and identification cards for seniors. It also establishes a \$20 reinstatement fee for people whose license is suspended for theft of gasoline.

Most significant, the bill calls for \$1.7 billion, 10-year bonding package that would finance and accelerate 25 high-priority state highway construction projects.

"The debt on this bonding package is

served entirely by the new revenues that come to the trunk highway fund from the new constitutionally dedicated portion of the motor vehicle sales tax revenue approved by the voters for November," said Bob McFarlin, assistant to the transportation commissioner. Revenues from the tax still leave more than \$1.7 billion for other trunk highway fund purposes.

The governor would also like to see all sales tax on leased vehicles be a dedicated transportation revenue stream and added to the motor vehicle sales tax revenue fund for distribution to state highways, local roads and transit. This move would likely raise \$450 million in the next 10 years.

A companion bill, [SF541](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dick Day](#) (R-Owatonna), was tabled Feb. 26 by the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

'A much bigger bite'

The governor's plan does not call for a gas tax, but [HF23](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) does.

It calls for a nickel increase in each of the next two fiscal years, and would index it to inflation beginning in 2009. It also would raise the tax on special fuels, such as E85, proportional to the gas tax increase. The 20-cent gas tax has not been raised since 1988. Since then, Erhardt said all but five states have increased their tax.

According to a fiscal impact summary, "This will bring in an additional \$237 million for fiscal year 2008, \$352 million in fiscal year 2009, \$378 million in fiscal year 2010, and \$405 million in fiscal year 2011."

His bill also calls for a restructuring and cap elimination of the motor vehicle registration

tax, would permit counties to impose up to a \$20 wheelage tax and would appropriate \$1.1 billion in trunk highway bonds over the next decade. It would permit counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, as well as Greater Minnesota, to impose a 0.5 percent local transportation sales tax.

"This bill will take a much bigger bite out of the problem that exists in the funding over what the governor is offering," Erhardt said. "A lot of it will be on a pay-as-you-go basis."

A companion bill, [SF5](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

County requests

Counties could play a greater role in funding roads in their jurisdiction under a bill ([HF946](#)) sponsored by division chairman [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston). It is similar to Erhardt's proposal, in that it would raise the gas tax by 5 cents in each of the next two years and be indexed for inflation. But it would allow counties to increase the wheelage tax they could charge, and to establish a local sales tax of up to 0.5 percent for transportation.

The bill would restructure the motor vehicle registration tax, while eliminating the cap and it calls for \$200 million in bonding.

All counties are facing increased costs, but not increased revenues for transportation, meaning property taxes have been increased to meet the needs, said Washington County Commissioner Myra Peterson, who chairs the Association of Minnesota Counties' Transportation Policy Committee.

Transportation continued on page 22

E-mail — love it or hate it

New technology presents new challenges

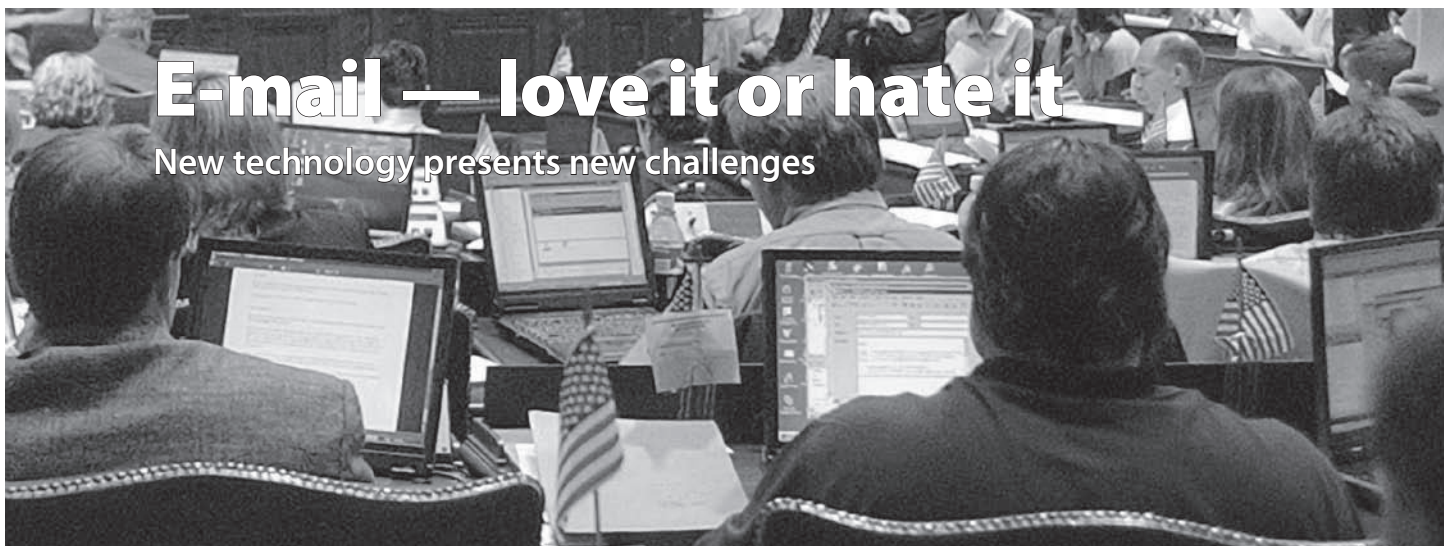


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Computers and e-mail have become an integral part of how legislative business is conducted.

By MIA SIMPSON

From typewriters to computers and cell phones, technology has affected “business as usual” at the Legislature.

Now that E-mail has surfed in on the latest technology wave, legislators can now electronically correspond with anyone at almost any time. They can also send and receive notices and newsletters, organize listservs and forward information as quickly as one can type and press “send.”

“E-mail does take up a lot of my time,” said [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview), who often uses his evenings and weekends to respond to messages from his constituents. “I think it’s a good way for people to stay in contact and to get a real-time response.”

But e-mail presents a change from an environment that, as former state Sen. Jack Davie said, “is run by those who show up.” One doesn’t have to “show up” when e-mailing; he or she can simply sit in front a computer.

“I hate it,” [Rep. Neil Peterson](#) (R-Bloomington) said. “From a mechanical standpoint, it’s great. But from a communication standpoint, it’s impersonal, cruel, mean and not very effective.”

Impersonal, unmoving

Peterson admits his opinion may be a product of his age. But as e-mail has become a vehicle for people to respond en masse on a particular issue, many legislators complain about volumes of impersonal, unmoving messages.

Welti and Peterson, who estimate they receive upwards of 50 to 100 e-mails daily, also say that people are sometimes more aggressive

than they might be face-to-face or by phone.

“People just fire away,” Peterson said.

An e-mail’s malicious intent may also lie beyond its surface.

Between Jan. 14 and Jan. 20, nearly 400,000 e-mails arrived at the House, but only about 12 percent reached their intended destination. The others were returned to sender or blocked, most likely because they included viruses or were flagged as spam.

Protecting the network

“Many people do not understand that e-mail is the perfect delivery system for an attack on any network,” House Network Engineer Peter Marren said. “If even one of the virus-infected files got through, it could have done damage to our system and data.”

Marren and Director of Information Technology Dennis Kern could be considered the protectors of the House network. Their mission is to seek and destroy incoming e-mails that may cause harm to a very precious system.

“It’s a constant cat-and-mouse game,” Marren said. “I need to be ahead of them, but I’m never ahead of them. There’s something new every week.”

When e-mail arrives, it faces two filters. The first blocks viruses; the second, spam. More than 75 subject lines commonly used by hackers are blocked automatically.

Such an endless variety of potentially pernicious material makes network managers extremely cautious. They say they’d rather accidentally block an innocent e-mail than allow a dangerous one to infiltrate the system.

Tips for writing your legislators

E-mail can be a fast, convenient way to connect with elected officials, but the jury is still out on whether it effectively influences them. There are rules of thumb for communicating with legislators that may serve e-mailers well.

“Do it as you’d do on the telephone,” [Rep. Neil Peterson](#) (R-Bloomington) advises. “Personalize it.”

This means introduce yourself — tell your name, your home address and your district. Then explain why you’re writing.

“Give as much information as possible,” [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) said. “But keep it brief. Three to four paragraphs, or a page, is enough.”

And be polite. Passion is fine, pushy is not. Legislators also say not to expect a response immediately.

“I tell people they will get a response back in a week or so,” Welti said.

“Following my security philosophy does require a few inconveniences for the end user, but I feel the trade-off is worth it,” Marren said.

It’s a perspective that sometimes haunts policymakers.

“From a political standpoint, a legislator would rather avoid constituents’ e-mail being blocked than getting a little extra spam,” said Nathan Hunstad, an IT analyst with the House DFL caucus. “Especially in small communities, where constituents can complain about their legislators not responding to e-mails in the newspaper.”

E-mail continued on page 23

Monday, March 5

HF1624-Hausman (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
St. Paul Port Authority; qualified emissions-reduction project recovery costs provided.

HF1625-Hosch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Permanent orders for protection and restraining orders authorized after multiple violations or continued threats.

HF1626-Ward (DFL)
Taxes
Brainerd and Baxter wastewater and water treatment facilities construction materials sales tax exemptions provided.

HF1627-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
International marriage brokers regulated.

HF1628-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
License tab violations surcharge reduced.

HF1629-Hilstrom (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Fair market value determination clarified in certain dedication proceedings.

HF1630-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Pavement life-cycle cost analysis required to compare paving materials in certain highway contracts.

HF1631-Haws (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Bioscience business promotion and marketing program established.

HF1632-Tillberry (DFL)
Taxes
Homeowners property tax refunds increased and household income modified for persons age 65 or older.

HF1633-Koenen (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Animal husbandry requirements modified and terms defined.

HF1634-Solberg (DFL)
Finance
Renewable energy economy higher education training needs study required.

HF1635-Lieder (DFL)
Finance
Highways safety improvement account established, and eligible purposes modified for expenditure of 5 percent of highway user tax distribution fund.

HF1636-Lieder (DFL)
Finance
Trunk highway interchanges construction funding provided.

HF1637-Beard (R)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Nanotechnology development fund program established.

HF1638-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Grants management process, governance and structure established.

HF1639-Faust (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Agricultural best management practices loan program provisions modified.

HF1640-Faust (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Feed law provisions modified.

HF1641-Solberg (DFL)
Finance
Washington Center pilot program for scholarships funding provided.

HF1642-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Wind energy conversion systems capacity increased for school board ownership.

HF1643-Gardner (DFL)
Taxes
Scrap metal dealers tax credit provided.

HF1644-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Renewable energy research funding provided for the University of Minnesota sunset date delayed.

HF1645-Bly (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Low-income residential customers energy affordability programs criteria specified.

HF1646-Hamilton (R)
Finance
Worthington redevelopment grant requirements clarified.

HF1647-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Judges mandatory retirement age raised.

HF1648-Gottwalt (R)
Taxes
Senior citizen's property tax deferral program modified.

HF1649-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Legislative Commission on Minnesota-Ontario Matters abolished.

HF1650-Nornes (R)
Taxes
Fergus Falls regional treatment center campus tax-free renaissance zone provided.

HF1651-Wagenius (DFL)
Finance
Environmental and natural resources funding provided; revenue disposition, fees and accounts modified; off-highway vehicle safety program established; and sustainable forest provisions continued.

HF1652-DeLaForest (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public employees police and fire retirement plan duty disability status clarified.

HF1653-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
St. Anthony Falls heritage interpretive zone signage provided.

HF1654-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Renewable energy economy higher education training needs study required.

HF1655-Slocum (DFL)
Finance
Opportunities industrialization centers funding provided.

HF1656-Thissen (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Jewelry products containing lead manufacture and sale regulated.

HF1657-Dettmer (R)
Finance
Washington County; Disabled Veteran's Rest Camp improvements funding provided.

HF1658-Peppin (R)
Taxes
Health care providers gross receipts tax third-party purchasers responsibilities provided, and itemization of tax on billings authorized.

HF1659-Bunn (DFL)
Finance
Bayport sewer system completion funding provided.

HF1660-Jaros (DFL)
Finance
St. Louis County Heritage and Arts Center studies and planning activities funding provided.

HF1661-Hansen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Railroad prairie right-of-way management provided.

HF1662-Moe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Wild rice management plan required.

HF1663-Moe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Wild rice; genetically-engineered organisms regulation provisions modified.

HF1664-Kalin (DFL)
Finance
East central Minnesota renewable energy plant feasibility study grant authorized.

HF1665-Gardner (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Consumer reports security freezes regulated and fees provided.

HF1666-Eken (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Terrestrial and geologic carbon sequestration reports and studies required.

HF1667-Shimanski (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Hutchinson Area Health Care privatization effective date clarified.

HF1668-Hamilton (R)
Taxes
Monosloped roofs used for livestock operations property tax exemption provided.

HF1669-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Amusement games permits, penalties and inspection provided.

HF1670-Morgan (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Election procedures and terminology clarified, requirements and duties modified and penalties imposed.

HF1671-Morgan (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Legislators, constitutional officers and agency heads prohibited from lobbying for two years after leaving office.

HF1672-Knuth (DFL)
Taxes
New Brighton tax increment financing expenditures outside district authorized.

HF1673-Sailer (DFL)
Finance
Gonvick regional emergency training administration center pre-design funding provided.

HF1674-Eken (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Environmental review rules relating to biofuel production facilities adoption required.

HF1675-Simon (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Car buyers' bill of rights enacted, disclosures required, dealer compensation for vehicle financing capped, certified used motor vehicle sales regulated and cancellation option required on purchase of used motor vehicle.

HF1676-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Finance
Minitex program funding provided.

HF1677-Sertich (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Conservation reinvestment program provisions modified relating to expenditures by existing heating or cooling systems.

HF1678-Johnson (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Public Utilities Commission electronic filing authorized, and technical and clarifying changes provided.

HF1679-Johnson (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Utility current and past due bills and undercharges payment arrangements provisions modified.

HF1680-Slocum (DFL)
Finance
Office of Educational Accountability funding provided through the University of Minnesota.

HF1681-Mullery (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Special retirement plan for post-sentencing officers and emergency dispatchers actuarial cost estimate provided.

HF1682-Koenen (DFL)
Finance
Upper Sioux Community water system improvements funding provided.

HF1683-Koenen (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
New open air swine basin prohibition extended.

HF1684-Madore (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Redevelopment housing applicant preferences modified.

HF1685-Mullery (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority powers clarified.

HF1686-Mullery (DFL)
Taxes
Minneapolis housing replacement districts provisions modified.

HF1687-Emmer (R)
Taxes
Buffalo wastewater treatment facility construction materials and equipment sales tax exemption provided.

HF1688-Pelowski (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Office of Enterprise Technology terminology changed.

HF1689-Hortman (DFL)
Finance
Industry sector training initiatives funding provided.

HF1690-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Minneapolis; East Phillips Cultural and Community Center improvements funding provided.

HF1691-Anzelc (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Lawful gambling expenditure restrictions modified; and game requirements, prize amounts and other provisions modified.

HF1692-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
Taxpayer notice modified on renewal of school district operating referendum.

HF1693-Erickson (R)
E-12 Education
Character development education revenue provided.

HF1694-Davnie (DFL)
E-12 Education
Teacher training to integrate learning technologies into K-12 classrooms provided.

HF1695-Walker (DFL)
E-12 Education
How's My Driving program required of all school districts relating to school bus operation.

HF1696-Loeffler (DFL)
E-12 Education
Special education litigation costs reporting required.

HF1697-Loeffler (DFL)
E-12 Education
State Board of Education established.

HF1698-Norton (DFL)
E-12 Education
Scholar loan program established to encourage teacher diversity in schools, revolving account established.

HF1699-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Student counseling services in high-need public high schools grant program established.

HF1700-Hornstein (DFL)
E-12 Education
Parent and community involvement in learning funding provided.

HF1701-Peterson, S. (DFL)
Finance
School counselors revenue established as a component of general education revenue.

HF1702-Faust (DFL)
Finance
School finance system changes phased in, and school finance reform legislative task force created.

HF1703-Brown (DFL)
Finance
Voluntary full-day kindergarten funding authorized.

HF1704-Tillberry (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Mandatory air bag replacement required for all motor vehicle collision repairs.

HF1705-Thao (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Board of Pharmacy licensing provisions modified.

HF1706-Mullery (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Private motor vehicle carrier definition modified.

HF1707-Loeffler (DFL)
Taxes
Taxpayer assistance grants notice to past recipients and timely procedure required.

HF1708-Peterson, N. (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Hennepin County design-build contract provisions modified.

HF1709-Winkler (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Public employment offers of settlement prior to arbitration and assessment of costs in certain cases provided.

HF1710-Hilty (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Private cemeteries clarified.

HF1711-Hortman (DFL)
Finance
Vinland Center for rehabilitation services funding provided.

HF1712-Masin (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Rental vehicle coverage regulated.

HF1713-Erhardt (R)
Finance
Household goods movers requirements modified.

HF1714-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Railroad Walkways Safety Act adopted, state rail safety inspector position established, special account provided and penalties imposed.

HF1715-Urdahl (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Greenleaf, Cedar and Sioux Lakes Area Conservation District study funding provided.

HF1716-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
New Brighton infrastructure improvements funding provided.

HF1717-Welti (DFL)
Finance
Transportation aid for flexible learning year programs authorized.

HF1718-Heidgerken (R)
Finance
School district integration revenue modified.

HF1719-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Medical assistance eligibility treatment of assets modified.

HF1720-Lenczewski (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County nursing facility reimbursement rates increased.

HF1721-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Dementia care and mental illness care training required for certain direct care staff, employers required to maintain training records and employee access to records established.

HF1722-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Pharmacy dispensing fee modified and report required.

HF1723-Walker (DFL)**Finance**

AIDS prevention initiative focusing on African-born residents grants provided.

HF1724-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Naturopathic doctors licensing provided.

HF1725-Moe (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Leech Lake youth treatment center proposal grant provided.

HF1726-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health Records Act adopted.

HF1727-Erickson (R)**Health & Human Services**

Single-family dwellings exempted from food, beverage and lodging establishments requirements.

HF1728-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

School immunization disclosures required.

HF1729-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health care, welfare data, medical assistance eligibility and MinnesotaCare provisions modified; MinnesotaCare II and Minnesota Health Insurance Exchange established; and Section 125 plans required.

HF1730-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Military affairs and veterans affairs funding provided.

HF1731-Hackbarth (R)**Taxes**

Electric generation peaking plant personal property tax exemption provided.

HF1732-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

World Summit Outcome of the United Nations General Assembly implementation and support urged of the president by resolution.

HF1733-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Re-entry grant addressing domestic violence and intimate partner violence authorized.

HF1734-Dominguez (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Minneapolis; employment services for ex-criminal offenders pilot project established.

HF1735-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child care assistance absent days modified.

HF1736-Atkins (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Board on Judicial Standards executive secretary Senate confirmation provided.

HF1737-Atkins (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Cigarette fires safety definitions and reduced ignition propensity standards provided, enforcement provided, fee imposed and penalties provided.

HF1738-Greiling (DFL)**Taxes**

Individual income tax rates modified, and revenues deposited in a K-12 education account.

Wednesday, March 7

HF1739-Wardlow (R)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 149 upgrades funding provided.

HF1740-Peppin (R)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Energy; ban repealed on issuing certificate of need for construction of new nuclear-powered electric generating plant.

HF1741-Atkins (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

School district tort liability regulated.

HF1742-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul; Asian Pacific Cultural Center funding provided.

HF1743-Juhnke (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Noxious weed eradication requirements modified.

HF1744-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Homeownership education, counseling and training program funding provided.

HF1745-Bunn (DFL)**Taxes**

Homestead market value maximum valuation limit indexed.

HF1746-Gottwalt (R)**Taxes**

Local government aid, city aid base increased for specified cities.

HF1747-Davnie (DFL)**Taxes**

Qualified business ventures investment income tax credit provided.

HF1748-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Residential mortgage lending licensing and education requirements modified, examination powers provided and criminal penalty prescribed.

HF1749-McNamara (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Pheasant hunting; cock pheasant bag limit rulemaking authority granted to modify the limit.

HF1750-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Critical Areas Act of 1973 modified.

HF1751-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Aggregate resource preservation property tax law and property classifications provided.

HF1752-Erickson (R)**Taxes**

Sherburne County public works building construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1753-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

High-cost home loans counseling and disclosures required.

HF1754-Peppin (R)**Taxes**

K-12 education income tax credit extended to tuition, and income phase-out for the credit modified.

HF1755-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Community-based energy development pilot project funding provided.

HF1756-Hortman (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Salvage certificates of title and vehicle being dismantled or destroyed regulated and electronic notification required.

HF1757-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Spicer; historic military airplane enclosure and visitor center funding provided.

HF1758-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Financial institution access cards regulated and security breach liability established.

HF1759-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Agronomic research on native plants grant provided.

HF1760-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

County state-aid highways grant program established for metropolitan cities.

HF1761-Lesch (DFL)**Finance**

Emergency preparedness coordinator funding provided.

HF1762-Simon (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

City charter commission discharge mechanism provided.

HF1763-Juhnke (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Farm wineries authorized to operate restaurants on site.

HF1764-Ruth (R)**Finance**

Owatonna College and University Center purchase funding provided.

HF1765-Brod (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Charitable organizations authorized to sell alcohol at silent auctions.

HF1766-Nornes (R)**Taxes**

Pelican Rapids wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1767-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

Highway construction training programs federal funds use provided and reports on training programs and disadvantaged business enterprise programs required.

HF1768-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Alexandria Technical College asset preservation and replacement provided.

HF1769-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Joint public truth in taxation advertisements and hearings authorized.

HF1770-Sailer (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Utility service disconnection and reconnecting conditions modified.

HF1771-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

Military affairs and veterans affairs funding provided.

HF1772-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Greater Minnesota transit federal funds use authorized.

HF1773-Nelson (DFL)**Finance**

Construction management education grants provided, permit fees surcharge and account established and report required.

HF1774-Kalin (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government aid payable to a specified city increased.

HF1775-Svigum (R)**Finance**

Pine Island Economic Development Authority grant provided for utility upgrades and extension for bioscience research park and integrated medicine facility.

HF1776-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Nonbinding presidential primary established.

HF1777-Liebling (DFL)**Taxes**

County program aids restored and county program aid inflation adjustment provided.

HF1778-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Public defender salary increase funding provided.

HF1779-Sailer (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota State Retirement System and Public Employees Retirement Association annuity back payments provided to a specified annuitant who was not timely accorded a combined service annuity.

HF1780-Marquart (DFL)**Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Higher education data disclosure provided relating to specified criminal offenses.

HF1781-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Motor carrier insurance requirements regulated.

HF1782-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

Rice; commuter rail service extension technical analysis funding provided.

HF1783-Faust (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teachers Retirement Association sabbatical leave related salary credit purchase authorized for a specified Minneapolis school teacher.

HF1784-Faust (DFL)**Taxes**

Pine County Judicial Center construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1785-Koenen (DFL)**Finance**

Railroad track rehabilitation funding provided.

HF1786-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

Carbon sequestration demonstration project funding provided.

HF1787-Welti (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Agricultural chemical incident provisions modified, and application and inspection fee eliminated.

HF1788-Ward (DFL)**Finance**

Silvicultural research funding provided to improve the quality and quantity of timber fiber.

HF1789-Peppin (R)**Taxes**

Dayton tax increment financing district authorized subject to special rules.

HF1790-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Commerce Department license technology fees provided and account established.

HF1791-Heidgerken (R)**Taxes**

Capital equipment sales tax exemption modified.

HF1792-Garofalo (R)**Finance**

Successful schools aid provided for schools succeeding in reading and mathematics or pre-kindergarten through grade two schools.

HF1793-Hilstrom (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Special education; task force established to compare federal and state special education requirements.

HF1794-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Children's early literacy funding provided.

HF1795-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 623, Roseville, fund transfer authorized.

HF1796-Marquart (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 852, Campbell-Tintah, fund transfer authorized.

HF1797-Hornstein (DFL)**E-12 Education**

No Child Left Behind Act and other student testing requirements impact evaluation provided.

HF1798-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Kindergarten space needs additional lease levy authorized.

HF1799-Bly (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Alternative schools progress assessment development required.

HF1800-Dettmer (R)**E-12 Education**

Staff development goals and expenditures clarified relating to education.

HF1801-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 463, Eden Valley-Watkins, authorized to levy for costs of remediating certain environmental hazards.

HF1802-Kranz (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School districts falling below average revenue funding provided.

HF1803-Erhardt (R)**Rules & Legislative Administration**

Legislative salaries increased.

HF1804-Faust (DFL)**Finance**

Kanabec County nursing facility rate increase authorized.

HF1805-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Living-at-home/block nurse program base grant funding provided.

HF1806-Dean (R)**Finance**

Health professional education loan forgiveness program expanded for child mental health professionals.

HF1807-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Inpatient hospital services payment required on a fee-for-services basis for the general assistance medical care program.

HF1808-Atkins (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Tax increment financing plan modification procedures clarified to not apply to certain acquisitions of property.

HF1809-Dominguez (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Essential community provider status applications and renewals authorized, safety net health care providers grants provided, reimbursement rates modified and MinnesotaCare outreach grants and study required.

HF1810-Poppe (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Family day care demonstration project authorized.

HF1811-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

County-based purchasing program profits allocated to provide services to individuals receiving medical assistance or general assistance medical care.

HF1812-Carlson (DFL)**Finance**

Robbinsdale nursing home bed moratorium exception provided.

HF1813-Ozment (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

County comprehensive plans required to consider natural heritage data, development limited in Greater Minnesota, and priority provisions required in certain county and city comprehensive plans.

HF1814-Emmer (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Rockford sales and use tax authorized.

HF1815-Smith (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act adopted.

HF1816-Erhardt (R)**Taxes**

Local transportation levies limited.

HF1817-Wollschlager (DFL)**Taxes**

Military service income tax credit modified and increased.

HF1818-Solberg (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Vehicle restrictions modified for vehicles hauling unfinished forest products, renewable energy objectives modified, wood products industry definition provided and tax exemptions and apportionment of net income modified.

HF1819-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Proctor sales taxes authorized.

HF1820-Lieder (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Crookston sales and use tax authorized.

HF1821-Hortman (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Vehicle title and transfer provisions modified, and motorized foot scooter definition clarified.

HF1822-Jaros (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Mobile telephones used in motor vehicles required to be hands-free.

HF1823-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
High-risk adults five-year demonstration project established to improve and promote recovery of adults who frequently use costly public services.

HF1824-Faust (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Amusement ride regulation provisions modified.

Thursday, March 8

HF1825-Kahn (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Smoking in a nonsmoking hotel room penalty increased and civil and criminal penalties imposed.

HF1826-Carlson (DFL)
Taxes
Vehicle purchase income tax credit provided for purchase of vehicles modified for people with disabilities.

HF1827-Simon (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Voting materials required to be printed in languages other than English.

HF1828-Simon (DFL)
Finance
Trunk Highway 7 interchange funding provided.

HF1829-Winkler (DFL)
Finance
Trunk Highway 100 reconstruction funding provided.

HF1830-DeLaForest (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Criminal vehicular homicide penalty increased for persons with a prior DWI offense.

HF1831-Thao (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Interpreter services work group established relating to medical and dental settings.

HF1832-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Libre Academy sober school onetime grant authorized.

HF1833-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Greenleaf Lake state park land acquisition required by a specified date.

HF1834-Wollschlaeger (DFL)
Taxes
Multi-county housing and redevelopment authority levies authorized.

HF1835-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Finance
Wind energy loan guarantee program established.

HF1836-Thissen (DFL)
Finance
Nursing facility rate increase provided for the costs of code compliance and reports required.

HF1837-Madore (DFL)
Finance
Options Too disability services interagency work group funding provided.

HF1838-Hosch (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Pesticide application limitations provided, rulemaking authorized.

HF1839-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Child care provider standards study and reports required.

HF1840-Abeler (R)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Sober housing work group convened and reports required.

HF1841-Simon (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Domestic abuse victim's right to terminate lease granted.

HF1842-Clark (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Cancer surveillance system expanded to include environmental toxicity data collection.

HF1843-Clark (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Landlords prohibited from limiting posting of campaign materials in windows of tenants' residences.

HF1844-Walker (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Hair braiding registration required.

HF1845-Severson (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Marriage recognized as a union between one man and one woman, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1846-Svigggum (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Marriage recognized as a union between one man and one woman, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1847-Emmer (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Marriage recognized as a union between one man and one woman, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1848-Mullery (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Employers required to pay for continued health coverage for injured workers, and attorney fee payment required in certain cases.

HF1849-Gottwalt (R)
Health & Human Services
Prescriptions or drug orders validity requirements specified.

HF1850-Simon (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Urban Debate League programs grant provided.

HF1851-Morgan (DFL)
Finance
Housing trust fund appropriation provided.

HF1852-Abeler (R)
E-12 Education
Student achievement of locally developed academic standards reporting required.

HF1853-Benson (DFL)
E-12 Education
Reading instruction clarified to require supporting children with dyslexia and related language disorders.

HF1854-Lanning (R)
Commerce & Labor
Free drinks and other promotions banned.

HF1855-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Nonprofit hospitals and outpatient surgical centers required to report on community benefits in a standard way, and work group established.

HF1856-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Universal health coverage provided, health care access portal established, dependent coverage extended, tax credits provided and prevention programs established.

HF1857-Eken (DFL)
Finance
Native American juvenile treatment center study and pre-design funding provided.

HF1858-Cornish (R)
Finance
Peace officer training related to domestic violence no contact orders funding provided.

HF1859-Cornish (R)
Finance
Uniform statewide no contact order form developed.

HF1860-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Historic preservation funding provided.

HF1861-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Historical preservation revolving loan fund established.

HF1862-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Minnesota Historical Society grant-in-aid program for county and local historical societies funding provided.

HF1863-Bunn (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health care payment information disclosure provided.

HF1864-Hilstrom (DFL)
Finance
Supervised parenting time service providers grants provided.

HF1865-Poppe (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Common carrier railroad employee rules required.

HF1866-Hansen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Game and Fish Oversight Committee membership expanded to include legislators.

HF1867-Hilstrom (DFL)
Finance
Vehicle registration taxes, title transaction fees and driver's license fees increased.

HF1868-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Debt service and referendum equalization aid programs equalizing factors indexed.

HF1869-Juhnke (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Food safety and defense task force established.

HF1870-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Uniform health plan claims processing required.

HF1871-Svigum (R)**Health & Human Services**

State-sponsored health programs funds use for abortion prohibited.

HF1872-Thissen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Hennepin Healthcare system personnel conflicts of interest regulated.

HF1873-Bunn (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health care cost containment goals annual reports required, medical expenditure review committee and health care transformation task force established, performance payments modified and grants provided.

HF1874-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Green building innovation grant program established.

HF1875-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Medical education research funds; public program volume factor for MERC converted from revenue to charges.

HF1876-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Annexation provisions modified and municipal boundary adjustment advisory task force extended.

HF1877-Tschumper (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Food license requirements and milk requirements modified, bulk tanks sale requirement eliminated and penalties clarified.

HF1878-Welti (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association service credit purchase for community education employment authorized.

HF1879-Laine (DFL)**Taxes**

Columbia Heights tax increment financing district authorized.

HF1880-Swails (DFL)**Finance**

Big Marine Park Reserve land acquisition and development funding provided.

HF1881-Bigham (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government aid city base adjustment modified for certain cities.

HF1882-Hamilton (R)**Finance**

Worthington campus of Minnesota West Community and Technical College; YMCA facility construction land-lease agreement authorized.

HF1883-Bunn (DFL)**Taxes**

Income and franchise tax apportionment formula modified.

HF1884-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Minnesota Land Conservation Incentives Act of 2007 adopted providing an income tax credit for land donations.

HF1885-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Invasive species emergency management provided.

HF1886-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

Greater Minnesota facilities aid grant program established, school district eligibility specified, grants funds use defined, matching requirement imposed and application process provided.

HF1887-Slawik (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Hearing loss early education intervention coordinator provided.

HF1888-Dittrich (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Academic rigor and 3R high schools provided.

HF1889-Urdahl (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota River Valley study group established to promote the historic, scenic and natural features of the area.

HF1890-Kalin (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Energy efficiency minimum standards established for certain products sold in Minnesota.

Transportation continued from page 16

Lieder's bill, which he said is "basically drawn up by the Association of Minnesota Counties," would also allow the imposition of a local transportation impact fee on building permits, something he said cities and counties have been trying to get for years.

"That would be something put on a property owner-based, in essence, on the number of vehicles traveling on a particular portion of road right in front of wherever they live or if it's a business," Lieder said. "That's the way the cities supposedly would get some money back for maintenance or reconstruction of the road. It's an issue that's been before the committees in other sessions."

A companion bill, [SF798](#), sponsored by Murphy, awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee. 🗽

E-mail continued from page 17

Legislators can block e-mail address from their computers, and no notice is sent to senders who've been blacklisted.

But just as an address can be blocked, it can be granted access. Marren keeps a week-long record of e-mails dubbed spam by the network and can comb through the list to find a message by request.

He says the first person to contact with complaints is the IT analyst for the legislator's political party.

Despite the time e-mail requires, and its vulnerabilities, quirks and, sometimes, hostilities, its mark is locked in history.

"It's probably the lifeblood of this place," Marren said. "I don't know how we would function without it." 🗽

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YOUTHBUILD SUCCESS

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Chris Anderson, right, a participant in the Youthbuild Program, told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division March 7 that he will graduate from high school in three weeks and has already started working with A&W Construction. Anderson and Tonya Ortiz, left, another program participant, urged members to support a bill that would provide \$4 million in the next biennium for the program.

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER

MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH

MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Is there a doctor in the house?

| | |
|--|---------|
| Approximate number of physicians licensed by the Board of Medical Practice | 17,100 |
| Number of complaints received by the board in fiscal year 2006..... | 770 |
| In fiscal year 2005..... | 780 |
| Percent decrease from fiscal year 2004 to 2005..... | 17 |
| In 2005, percentage of all practicing physicians who were female..... | 28 |
| Statewide median age of active physicians | 48 |
| Active physicians 55 and older in 2005, by percent | 28 |
| Percent of physicians 55 and over who were female | 11 |
| Percentage of physicians under age 45 who were female | 40 |
| Of physicians practicing in rural areas in 2005, percentage who were women..... | 24 |
| Percentage of physicians practicing in 2005 in urban areas who were women | 28 |
| Of all first-year Minnesota medical students in 2005, percent who were women..... | 47 |
| Percent of physicians who practiced in the state's most rural counties in 2005 | 5 |
| Number of physicians statewide per every 100,000 Minnesotans in 2005..... | 246 |
| Counties where more than 60 percent of the state's physicians practice | 3 |
| Number of physicians practicing in Olmsted County, home of the Mayo Clinic, per 100,000 Minnesotans | 1,551 |
| State average per 100,000 population..... | 143 |
| Physicians, by percent, practicing in a primary care specialty in Olmsted County | 28 |
| Percent of rural physicians in 2005 that practiced in a primary care specialty..... | 78 |
| Percent of surgical specialists practicing in non-metropolitan area counties | 16 |
| Percent in the state's 46 most rural counties | 4 |
| Non-surgical specialists practicing in non-metropolitan area counties in 2005 | 9 |
| Percent practicing in rural areas..... | 2 |
| Number of Minnesotans who worked in health care occupations in 2005..... | 210,000 |
| Percent of rural area jobs | 20 |
| Percentage of all state physician assistants in 2005 who were women | 58 |
| Statewide, physician assistant median age in 2005..... | 41 |
| Median age for registered nurses..... | 47 |
| Percentage of all registered nurses that are female..... | 93 |
| Number of pharmacists licensed to practice in the state in 2005..... | 4,720 |
| Percentage of state's pharmacists who live in the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area | 58 |

— L. SCHUTZ

Sources: Rural Minnesota Journal, published in 2007 by the Center for Rural Policy and Development; [Board of Medical Practice](#) Biennial Report, July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2006.

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SESSION WEEKLY



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THE STATE'S OTHER GOVERNMENTS
GROCERIES WITH WINE
EXEMPTIONS FOR THE 'BACK 40'

HF1891- HF2164

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: The Minnesota State Capitol dome from inside the rotunda.

—Photo by: Andrew VonBank

MAC and Met — the state's other governments

Little legislative oversight over combined \$900 million budget draws concern



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The mission of the Metropolitan Airports Commission is to “provide and promote safe, convenient, environmentally sound and cost competitive aviation services for our customers”

BY CRAIG GREEN

When large appropriation bills are before the Legislature, they go through several committee hearings followed by debate on the House and Senate floor. If the bill passes, there is the threat of a gubernatorial veto.

When projects are presented to the [Metropolitan Airports Commission](#) and the [Metropolitan Council](#), elected officials do not have a say. The two bodies, whose members are not elected, are free to make their own policy and budget decisions. They have combined budgets of more than \$900 million, and \$2.8 billion in outstanding debt.

This policy autonomy and financial power has some legislators thinking it's time for a change.

Control issues

The MAC was created by state law in 1943 to coordinate aviation services throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Today, with a budget of approximately \$243 million, it is the third-largest aviation system in the country, owning and operating the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and six reliever airports.

The commission has 15 members: 13 are appointed by the governor – eight members from the metro area; four from Greater Minnesota; and a chair. The additional two seats are for the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul or their designee.

With recent high profile issues in the media, the MAC has come under more scrutiny, and the call for change has become louder. Attempts to change the way the MAC

operates, however, are nothing new.

[Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), chair of the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, said recent attention to the MAC is not unusual. “Whenever there are big events, like the Northwest contract or the noise lawsuits against the MAC, concerns about governance come up,” Hilstrom said.

During the last biennium, a bill was proposed to require the commission to submit all budgets for approval, while another bill would have abolished the MAC altogether.

One of four House bills introduced as of March 13 dealing with the commission is [HF673](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls).

Approved by the committee March 7, the bill would prohibit the commission from entering into any agreement that results in reduction of a carrier's costs by more \$100 million, unless the agreement is approved by the Legislature. One week later, the House Transportation

and Transit Policy Subcommittee referred the bill without recommendation to the House Transportation Finance Division.

A companion bill, [SF580](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

Specifically referring to the recent MAC lease negotiations that are expected to save Northwest Airlines more than \$239 million, Hornstein believes that the bill would provide a public forum to discuss issues involving large sums of taxpayer money. “It guarantees that our constituents, through the legislative process, have an opportunity to publicly discuss and examine an agreement that has far-reaching implications for the future of aviation in the state,” Hornstein said.

Negotiations between airports and airline carriers is part of the normal business of running an airport, and for the Legislature to get involved in day-to-day management would not help, said MAC Executive Director Jeffrey Hamiel. Coming to an agreement with the airlines, like the recent airline negotiations, is what the MAC has been commissioned by the Legislature to do.

Council membership

Established by statute in 1967, the Metropolitan Council's mission is to coordinate the planning and development of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. With a current budget of \$665 million and broad taxing authority, the council implements and manages programs in regional planning, transportation, wastewater treatment and a regional park system.

First Reading continued on page 4

With all 16 council members and the chair appointed by the governor, calls for changes to the selection process began almost immediately.

Two years after it was created, a bill was introduced calling for council members to be elected. In 1977, a Senate task force was created to investigate whether there was a need for the council, and if not, how to proceed. Though the committee recommended 4-2 for elections, and though many bills have since been introduced in the House and the Senate, the governor appointments continue.

As of March 13, 10 bills have been introduced this year that would directly affect the council. Under [HF312](#), also sponsored by Hornstein, the 16 council members would be elected to four-year terms (the chair would be elected from among these members), and council districts would be redrawn after each federal census.

Former state legislator Myron Orfield (DFL-Mpls) said that the council is a body with unprecedented power in need of legislative oversight. As the third largest local government in the state, it needs to be held responsible for its actions, Orfield said.

Peter Bell, chairman of the council, said it has "broader and deeper support than it ever has." Citing many of the council's accomplishments, Bell argued that elections would lead to a less diverse council, disruptions in ongoing projects and political concerns would begin to outweigh the council's regional focus.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

More than 35 million passengers travelled through Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in 2006. There were 475,656 landings and takeoffs there last year.

The bill was approved by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee March 5, and awaits action by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A similar bill, sponsored by Orfield, passed during the 1997 session but was vetoed by Gov. Arne Carlson.

A companion bill, [SF81](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action on the Senate floor.

The next steps

Witnesses testified before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee that both entities are well-managed and effective.

However, Hilstrom said, there also is a consensus among committee members that changes need to be made. What those changes are, that still has to be worked out.

In a recent discussion about a bill that would expand the membership of the MAC, [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) offered a unique take. What if the MAC goes away, and the Metropolitan Council oversees the airport and all the metropolitan issues? "Maybe we put it all together," he said.

Not much was said about Howes' suggestion. But [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), who lives less than 10 miles from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, nodded in agreement. 🙋

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held March 8-15 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- bill the governor signed or vetoed.

AGRICULTURE

Organic certification assistance

The state's growing number of organic farmers could get help in paying for annual organic certification costs, under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton).

All producers and processors who annually sell more than \$5,000 in organic products must pay, on average, \$900 each year to be certified by an accredited certification agency.

[HF846](#) would appropriate \$275,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for the Department of Agriculture to appropriate grants up to \$500 annually to eligible farmers, sellers, processors and packagers of organic products to help pay for the certification.

"I see this not as a production subsidy but really providing some regulatory relief," said Jim Riddle, a member of the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force. He said that in 1998, Minnesota initiated the first cost-share program in the nation. The program is currently funded at \$50,000 a year. "It is very modest, only providing up to \$200 per farm per year," Riddle said.

Meg Moynihan, organic and diversification specialist for the department, said there are slightly more than 500 farmers who are certified organic in the state. She said the current law only applies to farmers. By expanding who would be eligible for the grants, she would expect more applications.

The measure was held over by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division March 13 for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

A companion bill, [SF1039](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), was held over March 6 by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Budget and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— L. SCHUTZ

BUSINESS

Keeping the Ford plant intact

For more than 80 years, the Ford Motor Company manufactured vehicles along the bluffs of the Mississippi River in St. Paul.

However, the plant is to be idled in 2008.

[Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul) wants to ensure that another company could readily move into the facility.

He is sponsoring [HF826](#), which would require an owner or operator of a motor vehicle assembly plant that discontinues operations to keep the plant and facilities in "saleable operating condition" while the state and other interested public bodies seek a new owner or operator.

Approved March 12 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, the bill is headed to the House floor. A companion bill, [SF607](#), sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

"While the company and City of St. Paul have admirably moved forward to plan for a new future, many workers are concerned that a dismantling of the plant and selling off of key assets, most notably the energy generating power plant, may remove some of the options from the table and limit future manufacturing possibilities," Mariani said. "The current plant employs workers at very decent wage levels that I think we should try to perpetuate if at all possible."

According to an April 2006 [company release](#), "The Twin Cities plant, which also opened in 1925, employs 1,750 hourly and 135 salaried workers."

Bob Killeen, financial secretary of United Auto Workers Local 879, said the goal is to keep the plant there, with its power plant intact, to have some sort of industrial site in the city.

"The power would be green power generated by a facility on the river, with four completely refurbished generators," he said. "We think this would be a state-of-the-art facility."

However, city officials said they should not be stopped from site planning.

"We didn't want to see the plant close, but our community needs to plan for the future," said St. Paul City Councilman Pat Harris. "We want to move forward to bring good-paying jobs into our community."

— M. COOK

CONSUMERS

Wine in grocery stores

Those looking for a little more convenience at the grocery store could find relief.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF997](#) would allow cities, counties and towns to issue off-sale wine licenses to supermarkets with at least 8,000 square feet of space.

Stores would be required to conduct an employee and supervisor training program regarding state laws regulating wine off-sales and sales practices, and establish an annual theft prevention plan. Also, wine sold could not contain more than 15.5 percent alcohol.

The bill was held over March 13 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee for possible inclusion in an omnibus liquor bill.

Mary Kowalski, a grocery store owner, said that selling wine at grocery stores would be a convenience for her clientele. "First and foremost customers want it, second is we're trying to stay in business and stay competitive," she said.

[Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie) said consumers want this and are "looking for that convenience and better price."

According to a March 2006 [legislative auditor's report](#), Minnesotans pay 5 percent to 7 percent higher wine prices compared to Wisconsin. The report also noted that Minnesotans could save about \$100 million annually if less restrictive laws were in place.

Opponents voiced concern about municipal and smaller locally owned liquor stores losing sales if grocery stores were permitted to sell wine. The report noted that if laws were made less restrictive, municipal stores have the potential of losing \$16 million annually.

Also, the opportunity for a wide selection of wines would decrease because grocery stores would sell the most purchased brands rather than those of small wineries, said Sam Kaplan, representing the Minnesota Wine and Spirits Wholesale Association.

Current law allows grocery owners to open liquor stores next to a store if a separate entrance is provided. Those stores pay an off-sale licensing fee.

A companion bill, [SF889](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Wireless protection for consumers

Consumers would have more assurance they are getting what they think they are paying for when it comes to cell phone contracts, under a bill approved March 8 by the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan), [HF635](#), known as the Minnesota Wireless Telephone Consumer Protection Act, would require wireless carriers to:

- provide an accurate area coverage map including areas where roaming or additional charges would apply;
- disclose the price of the service, monthly access fees, base charges, the amount of any activation or initiation fee, and charges for roaming, long distance calls, exceeding minutes or usage in any allowance collected and retained by the carrier, and disclose a good faith estimate of the amount of government-mandated charges and taxes;
- disclose in at least 12-point font that the price may change if allowed in the contract provision, and any early termination fee; and
- provide, in writing, the terms of the contract prior to the execution of the contract.

Jessica Palmer-Denig, manager of the Residential and Small Business Utilities Division of the attorney general's office, said the bill would offer basic consumer protection. The office, in some years, has "received more complaints about the wireless industry than it did about all other telecommunications and energy utilities combined," she said.

K. Dane Snowden, vice president of external and state affairs for CTIA-The Wireless Association, said the bill is unnecessarily burdensome and offers "no flexibility" for the highly competitive market.

The bill now goes to the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division.

A companion bill, [SF833](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Made in the USA

House approval was given to a bill that would ensure a symbol of our country is made in America.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), [HF122](#), would prohibit the sale of the American flag unless manufactured in the United States. It was passed 83-46 March 15. The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) is the sponsor.

"If anything should be made in the United States, it should be the American flag," Rukavina said. He removed language that

would have prohibited the selling of novelties or other items depicting the flag.

[Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) said the change is not a matter that can be addressed at the state or federal level. In a consumer-driven society, with open world markets that offer cheaper products, it's the consumers who choose to purchase those, he said.

Rukavina responded, "I hope that this idea gets spread across this country and people start to look at what they're buying in the store."

[Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) questioned what the penalties would be for those who sell a flag made in another country.

Rukavina said the intent of the bill is directed at stores and Internet sales. "But to say that anyone is going to be arrested" for selling a flag at a garage sale is absurd, he said.

Several attempted amendments were ruled out of order, including one sponsored by Westrom, that would have restricted all legislators voting in favor of the measure from driving or owning vehicles not manufactured in the United States.

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Tracking predators online

Predatory offenders are required by law to provide several pieces of information to local law enforcement, including primary address, places of employment, automobile description and license plate number.

[Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park)

would like to see e-mail and instant message screen names added to that list.

He sponsors [HF1043](#), an attempt to work with some tools other states use to monitor Internet activity.

Last year, Virginia Attorney General Robert McDonnell proposed that Virginia work with MySpace.com to track offenders by their e-mail and instant messaging address, with enforceable penalties for noncompliance.

Serving as a possible precursor to Minnesota doing something similar, the bill would give local authorities a novel and useful tool to track these offenders online, Simon said.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano), who commended Simon on the bill, offered an amendment that would require all registered sex offenders to purchase and display "sexual predator" license plates. On a roll call vote, it fell one vote short of approval.

Approved by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee March 13, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF925](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Free neighborhood busing

St. Paul children could be linked to libraries, parks and recreational centers after school and on Saturdays with free busing provided by the city.

"Children without adult supervision are at



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Antwane Lewis, right, and her sister, Serene, peek out the window of a brightly painted circulator bus outside the hearing room where a bill to appropriate money for St. Paul neighborhood circulator buses was being heard. The girls, who live on the east side of St. Paul, ride a circulator bus to the Adam Spanish Emersion School on the city's west side.

greater risk of truancy, stress, poor grades, risk-taking behavior and substance abuse,” said St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF1275](#) would provide \$700,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to expand the Neighborhood Circulator bus system. The House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division laid the bill over March 13 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

One bus now operates on the West Side of St. Paul. With the extra funding, buses would be able to service 10 additional neighborhoods.

According to the bill, the Neighborhood Circulators seek to strengthen the neighborhood as a place for children’s learning and development, promote the development and education of children, reduce truancy and improve the visibility of the neighborhood network of youth programs.

The lack of transportation to community programs is a problem. This bill gets the children to the programs that will help with their learning, Coleman said.

A companion bill, [SF1182](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Division.

— S. HARDING

Education changes

The [Department of Education](#) gave an overview of a bill that would make administrative and technical changes to the education code.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF1197](#) was approved March 9 by the House E-12 Education Committee and referred to the House K-12 Finance Division.

Some of the proposed changes to the code, which defines state education policy, include:

- charter schools would be required to transmit records to a transfer student’s new school district, charter school, or non-public school;
- school districts would have to adopt policies and procedures for the academic acceleration of gifted and talented students;
- “highly qualified teacher” would be defined as someone having a Minnesota license, a bachelor’s degree, and who has demonstrated teacher competency in each core academic subject area that they teach;
- the department would provide specialized services to the “blind and physically handicapped”;
- the phase-in of full-day services licensed child care centers or family care homes would be required. By 2013 a minimum of 50 percent of state-funded enrollment must be provided through agreements

with licensed full-day child care programs; and

- if a district charges fees for pre-kindergarten or full-day kindergarten, it would have to establish a reasonable sliding-fee scale or waive the fee if the parent is unable to pay for it.

A companion bill, [SF1246](#), sponsored by Sen. Chuck Wiger (DFL-North St. Paul), was referred to the Senate Finance Committee March 14.

— S. HARDING

Language preservation

In Minnesota’s four Dakota communities, there are fewer than 20 fluent speakers of the native tongue. Out of the 40,000 enrolled Ojibwe, there are only 300 fully fluent speakers of the language.

A bill would attempt to bring these two languages back from the brink of extinction.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield), [HF779](#) would establish the Council on Indigenous Languages to promote activities and programs that are specific to promoting and revitalizing indigenous language for American Indian children and adults.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 9 and referred it to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Under the bill, the council would be comprised of one member from each of the 11 tribes in Minnesota and 10 members selected by the state Dakota/Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance who have expertise in indigenous languages.

If the council is established and funding is appropriated, a pre K-12 program applicant would be given due consideration for funding, said John Poupart, president of the American Indian Policy Center.

Funding requests are unspecified in the bill.

Supporters say that other native language immersion programs around the world have succeeded in raising test scores in native populations.

For example, the Maori Language Immersion experience in New Zealand increased the pass rate from 15 percent in the education system to a 75 percent pass rate with a higher percentage of students continuing on to higher education, according to Jennifer Bendickson, bookkeeper and artist for the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals.

A companion bill, [SF586](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), was scheduled to be heard March 15 by the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division.

— S. HARDING

Extended kindergarten

Minnesota families could opt to have their kindergartners spend eight weeks of summer vacation in school instead of staying home.

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsors [HF1426](#), which would establish a program for extended-year kindergarten. The House Disparities in Student Support and Service Subcommittee approved the bill March 12 and referred it to the House K-12 Finance Division.

The program would start four weeks prior to the regular start of school and end four weeks after the regular school year is complete.

The program’s goal is to ensure that every child has the opportunity before first grade to develop the skills and abilities necessary to read and succeed in school, according to the bill.

Aid for the extended year kindergarten would equal \$600 multiplied by the number of students attending the program.

“For \$5 million we could cover 8,000 incoming kindergartens. That’s roughly 15 percent of incoming kindergarten students to public schools,” Davnie said.

If there is limited space in the program, students from low-income families would be given priority.

A companion bill, [SF1668](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

‘Responsible’ sex education

Minnesota’s middle and high school students could be attending “responsible” family life and sexuality education programs in the future.

Sponsored by [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF615](#) would allow school districts to establish curriculum for the program, and appropriate \$430,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for training educators and to operate up to eight regional training sites.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 13 and referred it to the House Finance Committee.

The bill states that if school districts choose to, they may offer the program for K-6 students, but must offer the program for students in grades 7-12. School districts may independently establish policies, procedures and curriculum for the program that is age-appropriate and medically accurate for all grades.

The courses would emphasize an abstinence-first approach to delaying sexual activity, while also including education about the use of protection and contraception.

Students would learn to respect community

values, encourage family communication, promote individual responsibility and contribute to healthy relationships.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake) would allow parents the choice of signing up their children for the program. The school district would have to make reasonable arrangements with school personnel for alternative instruction for those that don't participate.

"The more we can empower parents the better our schools are going to be," he said.

Parents and guardians would be able to excuse their children from all or part of the program.

A companion bill, [SF588](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Recovering student transfers

Students that are in recovery-focused high schools could be allowed to participate in [Minnesota State High School League](#)-sponsored activities in their resident school district.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville), and [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), [HF1425/SF1499](#)* was approved 128-6 by the House March 15. Approved 64-0 by the Senate March 14, it now goes to the governor.

The bill would allow students who have successfully completed a licensed treatment program to immediately participate in league activities in their home district even though they may be attending a recovery-focused school in another district.

Local school districts could still enforce penalties on those students for violating a league or district rule.

This bill keeps students active in their sport, and they can go to a special school to help their problem, [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) said.

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said when a student in recovery goes back to their old haunts, success for them is zero. "It's one more pressure on parents."

— S. HARDING

ELECTIONS

Electronic overseas absentee voting

Men and women serving in the military overseas would have a better chance of having their absentee vote counted, under a bill approved March 13 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom), [HF1259](#) would allow active-duty military personnel and people who have never

resided in the United States but are eligible voters to be sent ballots electronically, and upon completion be returned by mail to their county auditor.

The bill would help assure those overseas who claim Minnesota residency that their absentee vote would be counted in general elections, and would remove "barriers for active-duty members," Kalin said.

Another intention of the bill is to help voting-age children who have never resided in this country, such as those of missionaries, to participate in the voting process, Kalin said.

Because of the short time span between a primary and the general election, it is hard to mail a ballot and have it returned in time to be counted in elections, said [Secretary of State Mark Ritchie](#). By allowing for electronic mailing of ballots, it would virtually cut that time in half.

Under the bill, the secretary of state would be able to facilitate special absentee voting procedures if a national or local emergency or other situation arises.

According to the Department of Defense, "there are 12,147 uniformed service members, 9,110 family members and approximately 64,360 overseas citizens that claim Minnesota as their voting residence."

[Rep. Sarah Anderson](#) (R-Plymouth) said for those who have never resided in the country, perhaps the bill "shouldn't necessarily apply to them."

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF1218](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Automatic voter registration

Permission to drive could also give the go-ahead to vote.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), [HF1546](#) would require that any eligible voter applying for a new or renewed Minnesota driver's license, instruction permit or identification card be registered to vote unless the applicant declines.

Approved March 14 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, the bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Working with various state agencies the [Office of the Secretary of State](#) would receive the information electronically from the [Department of Public Safety](#) and then verify the age, citizenship and if there are any prior felonies to assure voter eligibility.

The public safety commissioner would be required to reformat the applications allowing for a check-off box so a person could decline voter registration. Driver's license applications currently have a box where a person can check to register to vote.

The bill also seeks to automatically change



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Ramsey County Elections Manager Joe Mansky, right, displays a Minnesota driver's license identification card application March 14 to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee during testimony in support of a bill that would provide automatic voter registration to driver's license and identification card applicants. Rep. Steve Simon, center, the bill's sponsor, and Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, left, also spoke.

the registration for people that move.

The secretary's office would be required to obtain a list of current addresses from the U.S. Postal Service of those individuals who have moved. If registered in the statewide voter registration system, the voter's change-of-address would be sent to their county auditor. If the move is out-of-state, the county auditor would send a notice letting the voter know their registration will be deleted unless the county auditor is notified within 21 days.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie said the change could save the state and counties up to \$1 million each election cycle in mailing fees and data entry staff time. It would also reduce the number of poll workers needed on Election Day.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said the office seems to be moving toward a less secure Internet-based system, rather than a paper trail, which is currently required.

A companion bill, [SF1297](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), was laid over March 12 by the Senate State Government Budget Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— P. OSTBERG

Transferring HAVA funds

Signed
by
the
governor

The [Office of the Secretary of State](#) can reallocate Help America Vote Act appropriations, under a new law signed March 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the law will allow unused appropriations designated for specific HAVA purposes to be transferred to other HAVA purposes.

For example, \$120,000 that was designated to process complaints received by the office that went unused. The law allows for the funds to be transferred for the purpose of maintaining the statewide voter registration system and to develop the capacity to handle registration and election transactions at the polling place.

In order to move funds, the office must provide "written notice to the commissioner of finance and the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over the budget of the secretary of state."

The law is effective March 15, 2007.

[HF160*/SF103/CH5](#)

— P. OSTBERG

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EMPLOYMENT

Training hard-to-serve residents

Gregory Ives is a nine-time convicted felon who has spent seven years in the [Department of Corrections](#) system.

He is now four weeks away from completing a 20-week construction program at Summit Academy OIC in Minneapolis.

"Before Summit I had nothing but dead-end jobs, I was a welfare recipient, and I just was on a spiral downward going to nowhere," Ives said. "The impact this has had on my life is I'm just proud, my family is proud of me, I'm not the black sheep of the family. I'm not Greg the Felon; I'm Greg the Carpenter, Greg the Guy That's Going Somewhere."

Opportunities industrialization centers have served Minnesota's hardest to employee populations since 1967 by teaching life-skills development and job training in a number of areas, said [Rep. Linda Slocum](#) (DFL-Richfield).

She is sponsoring [HF1655](#) that would appropriate \$4.15 million in the upcoming biennium to help fund the centers, whose client base is 75 percent minority and whom approximately 50 percent receive welfare.

It was held over March 14 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

William Means, executive director of the Minnesota OIC State Council, said there five programs — Bemidji, Mille Lacs and three in the urban area — that received \$2.9 million in this biennium from the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#).

"For every dollar that they receive there is a \$4 minimum overall return on the investment by educating their clients, assisting them in finding a career and instilling confidence and the skills needed to be a productive member of the community," Slocum said.

"We believe the best social service program in the world is a job," said Leroy West, chief administrative office at the Summit Academy OIC.

A companion bill, [SF1473](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), was laid over March 12 by the Senate Economic Development Budget Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— M. COOK

A little honor for veterans

Public school staff members who are veterans would be able to take Veterans Day off with pay as one of their personal days, under a bill ([HF521](#)) sponsored by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport).

The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over March 13 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The bill also states that if a school is open on Veterans Day, instruction must be given for at least 30 minutes or one class period on the significance of the service that is provided by veterans to the nation.

Heidgerken said that if there is school on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the school requires students to learn about him, "This bill does the same thing for veterans."

The bill also encourages private employers in Minnesota to honor veterans by giving them a paid day off on Veterans Day.

A companion bill, [SF350](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— S. HARDING

ENERGY

Hydrogen power

A House division laid over a bill March 9 that would create a road map for Minnesota to develop hydrogen power as a renewable energy source, and would appropriate \$10 million for a competitive grant program.

[HF1392](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), was held over for possible inclusion in the House Energy Finance and Policy Division's omnibus bill. A companion, [SF1282](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), was scheduled to be heard March 13 by the Senate Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Budget Division.

The bill would direct the [Department of Commerce](#) to develop "a vision, goals, general timeline, and measurable milestones" for ramping up hydrogen power initiatives in the state. It would also appropriate \$10 million in grant money that could be used for a variety of projects, including the construction of fueling stations for hydrogen-powered vehicles.

Rolf Nordstrom, Upper Midwest Hydrogen Initiative program director for the Great Plains Institute, said that hydrogen power represents not only a clean and renewable source of energy, but also a potentially lucrative industry for the state as well.

"Without a clear public commitment, and a vision for how hydrogen fuel cells fit in Minnesota's overall energy system, other states are going to reap the rewards instead and have these industries emerge in their states," Nordstrom said.

Bob Olson, chairman and owner of St. Stephen State Bank in St. Cloud, said the United States is "10 or 15 years behind other parts of the world" in regard to developing hydrogen

fuel technology. He recommended spending much more than the \$10 million allocated in the bill, and said private investments would likely follow suit.

— N. BUSSE

ENVIRONMENT

More oversight for BWSR

A House committee approved a bill March 13 that would increase oversight of local water management entities by the [Board of Water and Soil Resources](#).

[HF1930](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), was approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and sent to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

Hansen said the bill was drafted in response to an [evaluation report](#) on the state's watershed management system, released in January by the Office of the Legislative Auditor. Among other things, the report states that the board's oversight of local water management entities has been "inadequate."

The bill aims to improve "accountability and oversight" of watershed management by directing the board to:

- establish performance and operational standards for local water management entities;
- evaluate the performance, finances and other activities of such entities no less than once every five years;
- post summaries of local water management performance on the board Web site;
- report watershed management performance to the Legislature on a biennial basis; and
- reduce, withhold or redirect grants and other funding from water management entities that fail to correct performance deficiencies within one year from being notified by the board.

The bill would also appropriate \$751,000 over the next two fiscal years to evaluate and report on activities of local entities.

One key finding of the report is not addressed in Hansen's bill: a recommendation that the board's executive director be directly appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.

A companion bill, [SF1782](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Combating tree pests

A House committee approved a bill March 12 that would establish a forest protection plan to prevent, detect and respond to the threat of invasive tree pests such as emerald ash borer.

[HF1183](#), sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls), was approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and sent to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

The bill would direct the [Minnesota Forest Resources Council](#) to collaborate with state agencies to create a task force that would be responsible for developing the plan. It would also clarify the respective roles of the Agriculture and Natural Resources departments in dealing with tree pests.

Loeffler said that emerald ash borer, an exotic beetle that was discovered in Michigan in 2002 and has since ravaged that state's tree population, is threatening to spread into Minnesota. She said that if the species establishes itself in the state, dealing with it could be extremely costly.

"Michigan has already spent over \$350 million in federal, state and local dollars dealing with [emerald ash borer], and they

haven't been able to manage it," she said.

Loeffler cited Dutch Elm Disease and Oak Wilt Disease as other examples of tree pests that would be covered by the bill's provisions.

Executive Director Dave Zumeta said the council is neutral on the bill. He cited a lack of funding in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget proposal and potential increases in the council's workload as its main concerns.

[Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings) encouraged funding of the task force, arguing that emerald ash borer is a serious threat and it would be smarter for the state to invest money sooner rather than later to combat it.

A companion bill, [SF1343](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— N. BUSSE

GAME & FISH

Let's Go Fishing

A program that helps enrich the lives of senior citizens and people with disabilities by taking them out for fishing and boating excursions could get a funding boost from the state.

[HF944](#), sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), would appropriate \$350,000 from the General Fund in each of the next two fiscal years to the Department of Natural Resources for grants to Let's Go Fishing. The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division laid the bill over March 13 for possible omnibus inclusion.

Founded in 2002, Let's Go Fishing schedules weekly three- to four-hour fishing trips for individuals age 55 or older during the summer, spring and fall. There is no cost to participants other than a current fishing license. Juhnke said the new funds would be used to expand the program by opening new local chapters and establishing four regional offices with coordinators.

Joe Holm, founder and director of Let's Go Fishing, said the program provides an opportunity for people who aren't able to spend time in the outdoors by themselves to have fun, build friendships and create memories.

"The one thing every one of these communities have said is that they've heard a common theme of people saying, 'Thank you. I didn't think anybody cared. Not only has this made my whole day, this has made my whole year,'" Holm said.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls), division chairwoman, questioned why the appropriation was coming from the General Fund instead of the game and fish fund,

ON TARGET

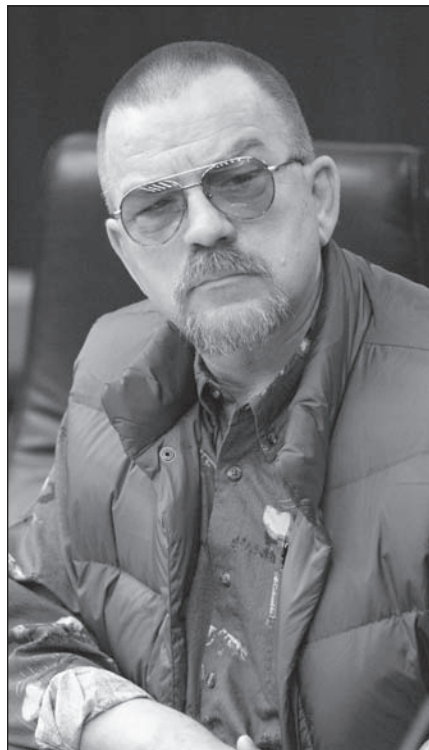


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Representing the Minnesota Association of Crossbow Hunters, Daniel Hendricks testifies before the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division March 12 in support of a bill that would legalize crossbow hunting.

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

to which Juhnke replied that the DNR had requested it.

A companion bill, [SF1029](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Hunting, fishing changes

Bag limits for pheasant hunters, the use of smokeless gunpowder for muzzle-loading firearms, and nonresident hunting fees are just a few of the topics covered in the 2007 omnibus game and fish bill, approved March 12 by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division.

[HF1116](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), now goes to the House Government Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A companion, [SF1184](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), was held over March 7 by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Under the provisions of the bill, numerous modifications would be made to the state's hunting and fishing laws, including:

- increasing the pheasant hunting bag limit to three cock pheasants per day after the 16th day of the pheasant season;
- repealing a prohibition on using smokeless gunpowder during the state's muzzle-loader hunting season;
- eliminating the reciprocal nonresident deer archery license fee;
- eliminating a ban on transporting raccoon, beaver and rabbit meat out of state;
- altering the state's firearm safety requirements to make it easier for military personnel and veterans to obtain a hunting license;
- allowing civil fines to be charged to fish house owners who leave their houses on the ice after removal deadlines have expired; and
- allowing spouses of active military personnel to purchase hunting and fishing licenses at the regular resident rates.

Before giving its approval, the division amended the bill to incorporate a number of smaller game- and fish-related bills. Dill, division chairman, noted that many of the additions are sponsored by Republicans, and that the bill has solid bipartisan support.

Division members voted not to incorporate a bill, [HF1241](#), sponsored by [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul), that would have legalized the use of crossbows during the regular firearm-hunting season.

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

Consistent price of government

Since the state began tracking the price of government, the share of personal income collected in taxes and other revenue generators for state and local government is about 16 cents on the dollar. And in the upcoming biennium, it may not be any different.

A nonbinding concurrent resolution ([HCR2](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), lays out the projected [price of government](#) for the 2008-09 biennium.

By law, the Legislature must consider a resolution laying out the price-of-government target for the biennium 15 days after the release of the February Economic Forecast, which was Feb. 28. Information from the economic forecast and the governor's proposed budget go into establishing the target.

The state began tracking these numbers in 1992-93, when it showed the price of government at 17.1 cents on the dollar, later dropping to a low of 15 cents in 2002-03. It is 16.4 cents for the current biennium. For the 2008-09 biennium, residents could be spending approximately 16 cents for state services.

The resolution states that 61 percent of the revenue collected will go to support state services, while local governments such as cities, counties and school districts, can expect about 39 percent.

The resolution was passed 85-48 by the House March 12. After being sent to the Senate, that body amended the resolution March 14 to raise the price of government to 16.4 percent, raising the state's share from 61 percent to 63 percent, and reducing the amount for local service from 39 percent to 37 percent.

The House did not concur March 15 and a conference committee was called for to work through the differences.

The resolution also calls for less reliance on local taxes.

— L. SCHUTZ

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

African-born AIDS prevention

Africa's AIDS epidemic is being reflected in Minnesota's African-born communities.

"This population is costly," [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls) told the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 14. "It's costly to our economy, it's costly to our government, it's costly to our hospitals, it's costly to our children, (and) it's costly to our communities."

Her bill, [HF1723](#), would appropriate

\$300,000 for AIDS prevention work in Minnesota's African-born communities. Approved by the division, the bill, which has no Senate companion, was sent to the House Finance Committee.

According to Dollina Odera, a consultant for the Minnesota AIDS Project, African immigrants represent only 1 percent of the population, but they comprise 16 percent of new HIV cases in the state. She said the challenge in preventing the spread of the disease has been overcoming issues persistent in their native countries: stigmas about sex and the virus and social inequities, particularly between men and women.

"We need to address the fears and misconceptions of HIV and AIDS," she said. "And we have to draw members from the community to help."

The one-time money would be geared toward "collaborative efforts that bring together nonprofit community-based groups with demonstrated experience in addressing the public health, health care and social service needs of African-born communities."

— M. SIMPSON

Medical marijuana

Legislation that would legalize the medical use of marijuana received a green vote from a House committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF655](#) would regulate who could supply, consume and grow the drug. Approved March 9 by the House and Health and Human Services Committee March 9, the bill was sent to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

Federal law prohibits the use and sale of marijuana, though in recent years 11 states have passed laws permitting its use for medicinal purposes.

Proponents characterized the bill as "tightly-crafted." They said it would allow physicians and other health care providers to prescribe the drug for "debilitating medical conditions" such as cancer, glaucoma, intractable pain and HIV. It would grant patients permission to grow the drug or to designate another person or nonprofit to produce it. It restricts the legal amount to 12 plants or 2.5 ounces per person. All users and producers would have to register with the state annually to be exempt from criminal penalties.

"We present this with the goal of helping sick and dying Minnesotans who are right now using marijuana to alleviate their pain and risking arrest to do it," said Neal Levine, director of Minnesotans for Compassionate Care.

Opponents contested its medicinal efficacy and warned committee members of further



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Dr. Jacob Mirman testifies before the House Health and Human Services Committee March 8 in support of a bill that would authorize the medicinal use of marijuana.

spread of the drug.

"I believe if this bill is passed, it will lead to greater use by others who aren't using it for medical reasons," Dakota County Attorney Jim Backstrom said.

Several members were also concerned with how one attains the seeds to grow the drug, given that the state would not supply them, and the unstated process of disposing of plants once legal rights to them have terminated.

"While you try to move this bill and make it as tight as possible, I still do think there are some significant holes in the bill," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague).

A companion bill, [SF345](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Preventing unintended pregnancies

The [Minnesota Family Planning Program](#), implemented in 2006, was designed to help low-income women and men gain family planning services at affordable costs.

Its purpose, according to the [Department of Health](#), is to prevent unintended pregnancies, which they say account for half of all pregnancies statewide.

But testifiers speaking on behalf of [HF298](#), which would appropriate \$8 million in grants to the project, said MFPP has been problematic for clinics across Minnesota. Brian Russ, executive director of Annex Teen Clinic, told members of the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division March 8 that they are losing money because reimbursement rates don't satisfy the cost of care and that they must now educate people about the program at the expense of providing health care education.

"For many of us family planning providers, the program is not financially sustainable, and it is difficult for me to see how we will accomplish the goal of decreasing unintended pregnancies when the capacity of family planning providers is diminished," Russ said.

The committee approved the bill, sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), and sent it to the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division. Only one provision — instructing the human services commissioner to adjust medical assistance reimbursement rates — was in the committee's purview.

Discussion turned to abortion as amendments were considered. Several members unsuccessfully tried to implement changes to the bill that would have prohibited or limited funding to family planning providers that offer abortion literature or resources.

A companion bill, [SF184](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

HIGHER EDUCATION

Regent selection

Appointments to an apolitical body were almost caught up in the political process.

At a March 8 joint House and Senate convention, Maureen Cisneros, Linda Cohen, Venora Hung and former Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson (DFL-Willmar) were appointed to six-year, unpaid terms on the [University of Minnesota Board of Regents](#).

Cohen was the only member of the quartet to receive support from both sides of the aisle.

Republicans said they did not have a problem with the quality of candidates, but with the process.

"We tried to develop a process that would take the partisanship, the politics, out of it and make this a real selection of people based on their qualifications and leadership and skills they could bring," said [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti). "It's a process that I think we perverted."

By law, the governor is to forward his choices to a joint legislative committee. If the

committee does not favorably recommend any of the choices, "the governor must submit a different nominee for the same vacancy."

Cohen, Hung, Cynthia Leshner and Peter Bell were the governor's recommendations to the joint committee, which met Feb. 27, but only Cohen received a favorable recommendation to the convention.

[House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) and [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), chairman of the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, said nothing was done incorrectly. Their party holds a 129-57 margin between the two bodies.

"The university charter says the members of the Board of Regents shall be elected by the Legislature," Sertich said. "It's also in the constitution."

Hung, a former student representative to the board, defeated Bell, a regent since 2002, for the seat representing the Fifth Congressional District. Hung, who initially applied for the student at-large seat, is currently a student at the university's law school and has been co-president of the university's Business Law Association since Sept. 2006.

Cisneros, a student at the University of Minnesota-Duluth who recently served on the Citizens League Immigration and Higher Education Study Committee, defeated Andy Post, a sophomore at the Carlson School of Management, for the student at-large position.

Cohen, a licensed psychologist and licensed marriage and family therapist and seven-year member of the Wayzata School Board, and Johnson, a brigadier general in the Army National Guard for almost 37 years and Lutheran pastor in Willmar since 1973, were selected as at-large members. Leshner, president and CEO of Northern States Power Company, was appointed to a board vacancy by Gov. Tim Pawlenty last year.

— M. COOK

Tuition caps

A tool could be put in place to help students control their college costs.

Sponsored by [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti), [HF783](#) would establish a guaranteed tuition rate for some students at a [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#) institution.

Because the state has no jurisdiction over the [University of Minnesota](#), the institution would be requested to do the same.

Under the plan, tuition for an undergraduate student, over a five-year period, would equal the tuition rate of their first semester. However, the rate could be adjusted for an inflationary increase measured by the Consumer Price Index.

"This gives students and families the ability to have a better planning tool when they do get into the college system," Eastlund told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division March 8. "This would take away the huge spikes that occur in the tuition process."

The division held the bill over for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

[Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin) expressed concern about the additional stress it could put on business and registrar offices.

"There are a number of colleges (in the country) that do this that have not indicated that it costs any more to manage it internally," Eastlund said.

Peter Zetterberg, a senior policy analyst in the university's Office of Institutional Research, said the plan is commendable, but warned that state funding must also be maintained. "A plan like this is only really feasible if institutions are able to count on a great deal of stability in their other revenue sources. ... If you suddenly lose 15 percent of your state funding there's really not a whole lot you can do about it unless you load it all on freshmen, and that becomes rather impractical."

A companion bill, [SF598](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), was held over Feb. 27 by the Senate Higher Education Budget and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— M. COOK

HOUSING

A tax on behalf of housing

[Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) said he decided to sponsor [HF939](#), which would raise the state deed tax after fully appreciating its intention: to support affordable housing.

"Housing issues are a foundational structure for our kids in terms of their education," he said. It affects transportation and health care. "Basically, we'd use the money in a house to create new houses."

He presented the proposal March 13 to the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, which held it over for consideration in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

The proposed 50 percent tax increase would apply to all house, commercial and property sales. Revenues would be directly routed to three state programs that offer housing services.

"We've got to do something," said Michael Dahl, executive director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. According to Dahl, \$100 million in state funding has been cut from supportive housing coffers since 2003, when the state faced deficits of \$4.2

billion. The additional surcharge, he said, could raise \$80 million in fiscal year 2008.

Critics, who legislators say have launched a campaign blitz in opposition to the bill, said the additional tax might, in fact, stifle the affordable housing effort.

"This is a recessive tax," said Susan Dioury, representing the Minnesota Association of Realtors. "This is going to hurt the people we are trying to help."

She argued that low-income housing turns over faster than other homes, thus forcing more taxes on the poor. "Our position is that you should stay within what the economy is generating. Fifty-three billion dollars is enough."

— M. SIMPSON

HUMANITIES

Dig carefully

Those who would intentionally damage burial grounds could be guilty of a felony, under a bill approved March 14 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [HF1710](#) clarifies criminal provisions for those that intentionally destroy, mutilate or injure human burials or burial grounds. The bill's next stop is the House floor. There is no Senate companion.

There are about 12,500 known burial mounds and more than 6,000 known cemeteries in the state, Scott Anfinson, state archaeologist, said. A good percentage are unrecorded in county recorder offices. The state archaeologist's job is to authenticate those unrecorded burials that are more than 50 years old.

"I literally get a call every day from realtors or landowners asking what they can do on their property because they may have Indian mounds or a white cemetery," he said. The bill helps to clarify for landowners and all involved how to proceed.

Jim Jones, cultural resources director for the [Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#), said the last few years have led to accidental unearthing in burial sites. The bill's clarifying language would help deal with these situations, he said.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) successfully removed language that said the costs of identifying burial grounds are the landowner's "at the discretion of the state archaeologist and other appropriate authority contingent on the availability of funding."

Anfinson said he sometimes has a long list of sites to authenticate at no charge. If those sites take some digging, and he needs other

professional help, some landowners want the job done quickly and will pay for the process themselves.

— P. OSTBERG

IMMIGRATION

Immigrant tax credit

Immigrants could receive a tax credit for fees paid to become a citizen.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), [HF747](#) would provide a maximum credit of \$300 and would be limited to taxpayers with household incomes of \$41,300 for a family of four in 2007. It was laid over by the House Taxes Committee March 12 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Simon said the English as a Second Language course, citizenship class and the fingerprinting and naturalization application cost more than \$600 combined. A taxpayer could claim the credit for each year the expenses were incurred for the taxpayer, spouse and qualifying dependents. Two-thirds of the state's immigrants would qualify for the credit. The cost to the General Fund in fiscal year 2008 would be \$4 million.

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office, more than 7,000 immigrants became naturalized U.S. citizens in Minnesota in 2005. This represents an 8 percent average annual increase since 1998.

A companion bill, [SF830](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), was laid over March 8 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

LAW

Drivers license reinstatement

It may soon be easier to get a driver's license reinstated.

[HF693](#), sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would allow payments for reinstatement to be made in two installments over two years. The bill was laid over by the House Public Safety Finance Division March 13 for possible inclusion in an upcoming omnibus bill.

With the current reinstatement fee of \$250, and a surcharge of \$430, the bill would require the first installment of 50 percent to be made before the license could be reinstated, while the second installment would be due the following year.

During that first year, the driver would receive a temporary license to be renewed with the second payment.

This reinstatement process would apply to

licenses that have been revoked because of failure or refusal to take a chemical test, a DWI conviction, or a criminal vehicular homicide conviction.

The driver must also be financially eligible for a public defender.

Patricia McCormack, director of the [Department of Public Safety's Driver and Vehicle Services Division](#), said that each year the number of people who do not renew their licenses in light of this issue could reach 20,000.

A Senate companion, [SF680](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— C. GREEN

MILITARY

Depleted uranium testing for soldiers

Some active-duty soldiers may be unaware of the potential long-term health issues they could face from exposure to armor-piercing munitions that contain depleted uranium.

This type of munitions, currently used by the military, presents a health risk from the toxicity when the depleted uranium dust or fragments enter a body. The federal government is conducting medical studies on veterans who have been exposed to DU to determine its effects, but the findings may not be known for some time, according to the nonpartisan [House Research Department](#).

[Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie), sponsor of [HF1065](#), told the House Veterans Affairs Division March 9 the bill would provide depleted uranium testing to any eligible Minnesota soldier or veteran who has served in active military service since 1990. It calls for a \$3 million appropriation in the upcoming biennium.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) would require random testing of 10 percent of Minnesota service members who have served at least 30 days in Iraq or Afghanistan since 1990.

Severson said the cost for each test is about \$12,000, and about 500 tests are projected to be administered. The Vietnam veteran said that during that war soldiers were exposed to "some nasty stuff."

Soldiers go in knowing the risks, but that is with the assumption that the government is doing its best to protect you, he said. "When these guys and gals are coming back, they have the right to know that they have been in an area where they may have been exposed."

The bill is not without its opposition, including [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls).

Calling her no vote, "probably the hardest

thing I'm going to do," she said the bill needs more research, and much of its application should be based on scientific findings.

A chemist by trade, Wollschlager found there is not a lot of consensus among experts about what type of testing should be used, and that testing could be inconclusive. She also questioned the committee being the body to set the percentage of personnel to be tested. "I would look to a panel of scientists to decide what that population should be," she said.

Approved by the division, the bill now moves to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF1397](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

Tax exempt military pay

National Guard members could be exempted from state taxes on money earned for out-of-state military service and training.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls), [HF551](#) would extend a 2005 enactment that exempts military reservists from income tax to National Guard personnel for out-of-state military service. The bill would retroactively pay National Guard members for tax year 2005 and after. Out-of-state service would include: basic training at out-of-state military facilities, special training and annual training at out-of-state military facilities and Mexican border patrol duty.

The bill was held over March 14 by the

House Taxes Committee for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

According to the [Department of Military Affairs](#), the annual pay for out-of-state training for Guard personnel is \$2 million. Because the bill would be retroactive, the estimated cost for fiscal year 2008 would be \$400,000 to include out-of-state training for tax years 2005, 2006 and 2007. The cost in fiscal year 2009 is projected to be \$125,000, with a 5 percent growth rate in subsequent years.

A companion bill, [SF454](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), was laid over Feb. 20 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

Veterans home concerns

About two years ago, the [Department of Health](#) found almost three dozen violations during an unannounced inspection of the 418-bed [Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis](#). Two months ago, the governor ordered state monitoring of the home after further inspections revealed continued violations and three suspect patient deaths allegedly due to improper procedures and neglect.

Representatives of the Minnesota Veterans Board appeared before a joint meeting of the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 9 to ask for \$14.8 million in the next biennium for six veterans homes. But division members wanted to know why the problems are occurring, and whether the



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Richard Carroll, right, of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, John Austin, center, vice commander of the District 4 American Legion, and Xavier G. Gagnon, left, a member of the Marine Corps League, watch a joint hearing of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health and the House Health Care and Human Services finance divisions address issues concerning the Minneapolis Veterans Home.

appropriation is enough to make up for cuts in years past. The divisions took no action.

"To me, if you serve your country, your country ought to take care of you," [Rep. John Benson](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) said. "How close does this actually come to seriously dealing with this issue so that you can be competitive again?"

"This brings us close," said Charles Cox, interim executive director of the board.

But other testifiers, including nursing staff from the Minneapolis facility, said the proposed budget doesn't address everything it should, specifically staffing levels.

"Today, I am here to tell you that we do not have adequate staff to meet the needs of our patients," said Margaret Skoy, a nurse at the Minneapolis Veterans Home. She and others said there simply aren't enough nurses, nursing assistants or LPNs to adequately handle the workload, and that management has mandated overtime — "16-hour shifts two to three times a week" — to fill staff shortages.

The meeting adjourned before board members could respond to accusations made by testifiers.

[Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairwoman of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, said they would reconvene later this session for further discussion.

— M. SIMPSON

TAXES

Exempting the 'Back 40'

How farmland is currently valued for school levy purposes could change.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), [HF681](#) would establish a system for valuing agricultural land based on its agricultural production value, beginning with taxes payable in 2010.

During a March 13 joint meeting of the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division and the K-12 Finance Division, Sviggum said the bill exempts the "Back 40 and timberland" and buildings on that land from school-bonded capital debt levies. He added that the bill could mean more money for schools in rural Minnesota because voter-approved levies would be easier to pass. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the property tax division's report.

Kyle Peterson, a farmer from Chippewa County near Willmar, said without changes to the current law, land rents will make it hard for farmers to survive.

The bill would also create a State Board of Agricultural Land Valuation that would develop a system for valuing agricultural

land based on productive capacity of the land, commodity prices and costs of agricultural inputs plus a return on investment.

A companion bill, [SF1479](#), sponsored by [Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

Preserving history

Minnesota could join neighboring states in strengthening historic preservation efforts if a bill heard March 14 by the House Taxes Committee becomes law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), [HF1240](#) would allow a nonrefundable income tax credit of 25 percent of the total cost of historic rehabilitation projects. All projects by individuals or corporations must be certified by Minnesota's [State Historic Preservation Office](#).

"It combines history with economic development," Marquart said.

He added that historic projects "spruce up" many small town main streets. But, the buildings need to be on the National Register of Historic Places to be considered for the credit. Neighboring states already have a state credit, which Marquart said is hurting Minnesota's economic competitiveness.

At the federal level, there is a 20 percent tax credit for historic structure rehabilitation for property that produces income. This bill would be similar to that, but in addition to income producing property, it would extend to qualified homestead property in historic districts.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

A companion bill, [SF385](#), sponsored by [Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller](#) (DFL-Mpls), was laid over March 8 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Taxing for transportation needs

Newly created boards could be able to spend hundreds of millions of dollars for transportation purposes.

"This state sorely needs investment, particularly in transit," said [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). "We've got dedicated funding for roads through the gas tax, but we do not have a stable, dedicated source for transit that's comparable."

She sponsors [HF1463](#), which would permit counties to impose a 0.5 percent local transportation sales and excise tax.

The bill was held over March 8 by the House Transportation Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion

bill, [SF1305](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), was tabled March 6 by a subdivision of the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

The bill calls for voters in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area to approve the tax increase in November 2008. Hortman hinted at possibly later amending the bill to include Chisago, Isanti, Sherburne and Wright counties to the area. Also called for is the creation of a joint powers board within the district to allocate the revenue. The money could be used for local and regional transportation projects, as determined by the board. Grants would only go to public entities.

"The creation of a joint powers board addresses a very critical issue we have in transportation and transit funding," she said. "Right now we have MnDOT and we have the Metropolitan Council, both of whom serve at the pleasure of the governor. The recommendations for transportation planning and funding that we receive here at the Legislature are constrained by the administration's overall funding ideas."

In Greater Minnesota, the bill would allow one or more counties, acting under a joint agreement, to impose the tax subject to voter approval, and use the money for transportation purposes.

Erin Sexton, director of transportation policy for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, said the group does not support the bill.

"Many people fail to realize the sales tax is a significant business tax, that businesses pay 45 percent of sales tax in Minnesota, according to the Department of Revenue," she said.

— M. COOK

Alternative fuel credit

Driving a hybrid vehicle could also supply a tax credit.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1002](#) would provide a refundable individual and corporate income tax credit for the purchase of alternative fuel vehicles. The bill was held over March 12 by the House Taxes Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Hornstein said the bill would promote the use of homegrown fuel sources. It would also promote the expansion of the hybrid vehicle industry.

Such a vehicle is considered a dedicated, flexible or dual-fuel vehicle operated primarily on alternative fuel. The credit would equal \$1,000 or 10 percent of the purchase price of the vehicle, whichever is greater. Alternative fuels include: natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, hydrogen, coal-derived liquefied fuels, electricity, methanol, denatured ethanol and

other alcohols, and other fuels as provided under the National Energy Policy Act of 1992.

In fiscal year 2008, the cost to the General Fund would be \$43.6 million and by fiscal year 2011, \$62.4 million.

A companion bill, [SF523](#), sponsored by [Sen. Michael Jungbauer](#) (R-East Bethel), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

Sales tax for transit

The sponsor of a bill to raise the sales tax in the state's most populous area calls the plan "a comprehensive statewide transit funding bill."

[Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) told the House Transportation Finance Division March 8 that [HF1112](#) would allow for construction of the Metropolitan Council's 2030 transportation plan, including eight new transitways and a doubling of bus service, by 2020. The bill was held over for possible

omnibus bill inclusion.

It would also help seven rural Minnesota counties that do not have transit service, and it would allow for an increase in evening and weekend service in Greater Minnesota, she said. "In particular we're looking to help the disabled community be able to use the rural Minnesota transit services to 14 hours a day."

The bill calls for a 0.5 percent sales tax increase in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, and a redistribution of a specific tax revenue.

State voters passed a constitutional amendment in November 2006 to dedicate all motor vehicle sales tax revenues to transportation improvements. Upon completion of a five-year phase-in, up to 60 percent of this revenue is to be directed to state highways and local roads, and at least 40 percent to public transit statewide. Of the latter, only 2 percent is directed to Greater

Minnesota. This bill calls for 5 percent.

"I think rural Minnesotans, right now are suffering under a [MnDOT](#) budget that can't afford to keep up with their demands," Madore said. "They have indicated they need approximately \$23 million a year in order to operate their plans. With the tax base we have here, I think it's fair."

Dave Van Hattum, policy and advocacy program manager for Transit for Livable Communities, said the bill would raise an average of \$272 million annually. "For an average individual in the metro, that equals out to \$80 per person, per year, or the equivalent of about two tanks of gas."

A companion bill, [SF1032](#), sponsored by [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport), was laid over March 6 by a subdivision of the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

— M. Cook

WARM WELCOME



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Miss Minnesota, Nicole Swanson of Lakeville, is introduced March 14 on the House floor.

Tracking 'My Bills'

Keeping track of House and Senate bills of specific interest during the biennium is available through the legislative Web site.

MyBills: Provides personalized bill tracking and e-mail and RSS notification for current Minnesota legislation.

Getting Started: Requires an easy one-time registration of a username and password.

Fully searchable: Keeps track of House and Senate bills by bill number, subject or author. Users enjoy the benefit of viewing bill status with items of significant current action highlighted.

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

Where to begin: Go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/leg/billslogin.asp



NOTES

Keep the stink out

Attending to House business can sometimes mean first strolling through a blue haze created from people enjoying a cigarette just outside the State Office Building.

The same odor could recently be smelled inside room 5 of the building.

"I've been taking this opportunity whenever the smoke comes into this room to let people know that smoking right to the south of the State Office Building, and right to the north of the State Office Building invites members who meet in committee in this room to participate in your smoke break with you. I don't enjoy being part of the staff and members smoke breaks," [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said during the March 14 meeting of the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee. "If you could observe now that the air intake system is bringing your smoke into our room, please refrain from smoking in those areas. We would appreciate it."

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), a co-sponsor of [HF305](#), the smoking-ban bill, couldn't wait to make a comment.

"I would say that there is no ventilation that actually gets rid of secondhand smoke."

— M. Cook

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

Changes to election laws

Technology could make online registration a reality

By PATTY OSTBERG

Imagine an Election Day where people wouldn't have to find time in their day to drive or take a bus to their polling place to vote. Instead, they sit in front of their computer to view the ballot and click their votes.

Online voting may be far into the future due to issues with securing online systems, said Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the [Office of the Secretary of State](#). Additionally, state law requires votes to be cast on a paper ballot. However, many secretaries of state are allowing election-related technological advancements like online voter registration to make the process easier, she said.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [HF1110](#) would make a myriad of election changes including allowing for online voter registration if a person has a Minnesota driver's license, identification card or learner's permit.

Approved March 13 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, the bill now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF1298](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), has been recommended to pass by a Senate subcommittee, committee and division. It now awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Online registration

Voters could also check online to see if they are currently registered by providing their name, address and date of birth. If the information doesn't match the statewide voter registration system, the individual would be informed to contact their county auditor or the secretary of state's office.

"Counties get lots of calls from people just to be sure that they're OK, and this would

allow them to do it anytime of day, and allow the county auditors to focus on their many other election duties," Fraser said.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) removed sections from the bill that would have eliminated a requirement that county auditors and city clerks publish sample ballots in the newspaper. Her amendment also took away the bill's provision that would have allowed for posting of sample ballots on newspaper, county or city Web sites, providing there was a notice to voters on where more information could be accessed.

Several committee members, including [Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), voiced concern for those without Internet access. "There are few people out there that are still in that range. We all sometimes take it for granted that everybody knows how to get on the Net."

Fraser said that was her first reaction to the proposal, but she changed her mind after learning that "what is printed is not very helpful for voters and sometimes causes more confusion."

Not all counties have the ability to post sample ballots on their Web sites, said Rachel Smith, Anoka County election supervisor. Additionally, in some areas there are multiple ballot styles for one precinct, if, for example, the precinct contains more than one legislative or school district. People don't understand why there are multiple offices and they aren't eligible to vote for each of them, she said. However, she said offices do send out sample ballots to those who phone with concerns before elections.

Other provisions

An amendment by [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) successfully removed a provision that would have required voter consent if a media representative were to photograph a polling place.

The provision had been included in the bill to address safety concerns of those, such as battered women, who are trying to protect their location, said Fraser.

Representing the Minnesota Disability Law Center, Mai Thor said there are voters in situations who want to have their privacy respected while out doing their civic duty.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

While the Internet may not replace physically going to the polls on Election Day anytime soon, there are several changes being proposed to election law, one which would allow for online voter registration.

Elections continued on page 23

Monday, March 12

HF1891-Haws (DFL) **Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Homes Board member and executive director service qualifications modified.

HF1892-Atkins (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Life insurance continuation coverage regulated, mortality tables use authorized in calculating reserves for certain life policies and other life and auto insurance regulation provided.

HF1893-Morgan (DFL) **Finance**

Trunk Highway 13 and Dakota County State-Aid Highway 5 interchange construction provided.

HF1894-Dill (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Cook County local sales tax extension authorized.

HF1895-Gardner (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Court file copy costs included in expenses paid on behalf of a person proceeding in forma pauperis.

HF1896-Winkler (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Legislative Commission on Terror and Disaster Preparedness established.

HF1897-Hilty (DFL) **Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Dry cask storage at Monticello; stay on Public Utilities Commission decisions extended.

HF1898-Kahn (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

State lottery authorized to lease space and operate a casino in the main terminal of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

HF1899-Kahn (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Local governments authorized to permit permanent resident non-citizens to vote in local elections, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1900-Slocum (DFL) **Taxes**

Property bordering public waters reduced class tax rate provided.

HF1901-Faust (DFL) **Finance**

World War II veterans memorial dedication activities funding provided.

HF1902-Erhardt (R) **Taxes**

Seasonal recreational property tax refund provided.

HF1903-Sailer (DFL) **Finance**

Conservation officer position funding provided.

HF1904-Hilstrom (DFL) **Finance**

Community dispute resolution programs report required and grants requirements modified.

HF1905-Kahn (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Genetic information use regulated relating to insurance.

HF1906-Tingelstad (R) **Finance**

U. S. Highway 10 in Coon Rapids additional travel lanes provided.

HF1907-Clark (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Hazardous substances state rules and federal regulations compliance additional facilities specified.

HF1908-Clark (DFL) **Finance**

Lead cleanup funding provided from the petroleum tank fund.

HF1909-Tingelstad (R) **Transportation Finance Division**

Speed limits legislative study and report required.

HF1910-McNamara (R) **Finance**

Trunk Highway 61 median barriers construction funding provided.

HF1911-Murphy, M. (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Correctional state employees retirement plan; additional Corrections Department employees included in plan coverage, and transfer of prior service credit provided for certain correctional employment.

HF1912-Murphy, M. (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Correctional state employees retirement plan; Human Services Department employees included in plan coverage.

HF1913-Wagenius (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources terms defined relating to native prairie restoration.

HF1914-Dettmer (R) **Transportation Finance Division**

Toll roads prohibited.

HF1915-Faust (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Amusement rides regulation provisions modified.

HF1916-Brod (R) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Construction permits clarified relating to ownership of a contiguous nonconforming lot or parcel.

HF1917-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Mercury-free vaccines preference established.

HF1918-Wagenius (DFL) **Taxes**

County program aid withholding authorized if certain reporting requirements are not met, and county grants provided to improve individual sewage treatment systems.

HF1919-Marquart (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Plats of land contents, survey and approval provided.

HF1920-Hornstein (DFL) **Finance**

Local transportation sales taxes authorized through joint powers boards, and grants for transportation and transit projects required.

HF1921-Solberg (DFL) **Finance**

Vehicle height, gross vehicle weight and axles weights regulated; recreational vehicle combinations defined; permits authorized; and penalties imposed.

HF1922-Gunther (R) **Commerce & Labor**

Boxing oversight requirements modified and fees increased.

HF1923-Lenczewski (DFL) **Ways & Means**

Demographic change effect on state tax revenues study provided.

HF1924-Lenczewski (DFL) **Taxes**

Metropolitan fiscal disparities program study required.

HF1925-Severson (R) **Finance**

State colleges and universities instructional services costs state share modified.

HF1926-Severson (R) **Finance**

Veterans affairs funding provided.

HF1927-Bunn (DFL) **Taxes**

Tax compliance auditors retention improvement funding provided and merit pay required.

HF1928-Thissen (DFL) **Transportation Finance Division**

Airport safety zones compatible land uses minimum standards established.

HF1929-Mahoney (DFL) **Finance**

St. Paul College research and training facility funding provided.

HF1930-Hansen (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Local water management accountability and oversight improvement provided.

HF1931-Mariani (DFL) **Finance**

Minnesota campus compact and postsecondary initiatives funding provided.

HF1932-Jaros (DFL) **Taxes**

Income tax rates modified.

HF1933-Marquart (DFL) **Taxes**

Local government aid distribution formula modified.

HF1934-Olin (DFL) **Finance**

Minnesota Public Radio grant provided to assist with conversion to a digital broadcast signal.

HF1935-Ozment (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Wetland conservation provisions modified and rulemaking required.

HF1936-Wardlow (R) **Finance**

Veterans memorial grant program funding provided.

HF1937-Solberg (DFL) **Taxes**

Cigarette and tobacco products tax stamps distributor discount provided.

HF1938-Lanning (R) **Finance**

Multi-county regional chemical dependency treatment facility and correctional center in west central Minnesota pre-design funding provided.

HF1939-Tschumper (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Food license and milk requirements modified; sale of bulk tanks requirement eliminated and Dairy Trade Practices Act repealed.

HF1940-Beard (R)

Finance

Airport funding advisory task force and state airports fund established.

HF1941-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minneapolis police relief association surviving spouse benefits provisions clarified and corrected.

HF1942-Erickson (R)

Taxes

Milaca water treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1943-Mariani (DFL)

Finance

Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities grant provided to a nonprofit organization.

HF1944-Anderson, B. (R)

Finance

Clear Lake/Clearwater Sewer Treatment Facility expansion funding provided.

HF1945-Tschumper (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Counties authorized to own and operate electric power generation facilities.

HF1946-Winkler (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Election contribution solicitation prohibitions modified.

HF1947-Marquart (DFL)

Taxes

Property tax petitions 60-day rule modified.

HF1948-Hilstrom (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Public defender representation provided for certain minors and other persons; and certain mandatory representation by public defender provisions removed.

HF1949-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Insurer conduct regulated relating to collision cases.

HF1950-Ruud (DFL)

Taxes

Capital equipment sales tax exemption modified.

HF1951-Knuth (DFL)

Finance

Energy-efficient design and construction grants provided.

HF1952-Dill (DFL)

Finance

Hotel fire inspections funding provided and fees removed.

HF1953-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Teachers Retirement Association membership election and service credit purchase authorized.

HF1954-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities annuity provisions modified and Roth account participation authorized.

HF1955-Olin (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Cattle; indemnity provided for destroyed cattle relating to bovine tuberculosis; rules authorized for control of bovine tuberculosis; and other animal health statutes and rules repealed.

HF1956-Paymar (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Orders for protection and no contact orders standard form provided; photographs required with certain orders; peace officer pre-service and in-service training required relating to domestic abuse protection and no contact orders.

HF1957-Bigham (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee combined charities campaign registration process streamlined.

HF1958-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Off-sale liquor license fees determined by issuing authority.

HF1959-Tschumper (DFL)

Taxes

School bond agricultural credit provided.

HF1960-Eastlund (R)

Taxes

Harris wastewater treatment facility and water treatment plant construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF1961-Madore (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Conviction term clarified relating to drivers' licenses.

HF1962-Ward (DFL)

Finance

Cuyuna County State Recreation Area trail development funding provided.

HF1963-Thissen (DFL)

Taxes

Income tax credit provided for donations to qualified scholarship-granting organizations.

HF1964-Westrom (R)

Finance

West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris addition funding provided.

HF1965-Hackbarth (R)

Finance

Oliver H. Kelley Farm Historic Site improvements funding provided.

HF1966-Morgan (DFL)

Finance

Special transportation service and small vehicle passenger service definitions modified; and complaints regarding special transportation providers regulated.

HF1967-Tschumper (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Environmental assessment worksheet required for registration of certain pesticides.

HF1968-Tschumper (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Environmental review project definition provided.

HF1969-Laine (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Homeowner's insurance non-renewal prohibited based upon a claim that the insurer denied or did not make a payment on, and premium increases based on certain factors prohibited.

HF1970-Otremba (DFL)

Finance

Construction impact grant program established.

HF1971-Tingelstad (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Department of Public Safety required to support development of a statewide planning, mapping and schematic system for all public schools for use by emergency response agencies.

HF1972-Dittrich (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Pollution Control Agency's public education program expanded; Minnesota Cleanup Day designated and minimum criminal penalties established for littering.

HF1973-Carlson (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Minneapolis Public Library and Hennepin County library system merger enabled; and transfer of employees, property and assets to Hennepin County authorized.

HF1974-Hortman (DFL)

Finance

Lawschool loan repayment assistance provided.

HF1975-Kranz (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Local Community Rail Security Act of 2007 adopted providing for protection of railroad property from terrorism, criminal activities and accidents; civil penalties and remedies imposed.

HF1976-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Volunteer firefighter relief association state supplemental aid provided and eligibility qualifications clarified.

HF1977-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Retirement plans obsolete references corrected.

HF1978-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Previous retirement legislation errors corrected.

HF1979-Anzelc (DFL)

Finance

County probation officers reimbursement funds provided.

HF1980-Swails (DFL)

Finance

Point of use water treatment evaluation provided.

HF1981-Norton (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force expiration date removed.

HF1982-Emmer (R)

Health & Human Services

Minnesota Family Investment Program eligibility requirements expanded to include drug tests.

HF1983-Walker (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Child care responsibility modified to exclude earnings of a child 18 years of age or older who is in a plan to transition from foster care.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HF1984-Huntley (DFL) Health & Human Services Pharmacies authorized to accept return of unused drugs and medical devices from county jails and juvenile correctional facilities. | HF1996-Dittrich (DFL) Finance Compensatory revenue pupil units minimum amount increased. | HF2008-Clark (DFL) E-12 Education American Indian tribal contributions integrated into student learning and teacher preparation and licensing requirements, and committees on American Indian education programs established. | HF2020-Anderson, S. (R) E-12 Education School background check requirements amended. |
| HF1985-Liebling (DFL) Finance Health care access fund purpose clarified, MinnesotaCare provider tax contingent reduction provided and health care access fund transfers eliminated. | HF1997-Tschumper (DFL) Health & Human Services Carcinogenic and endocrine-disrupting pesticides and nervous system toxin in pesticides registration and review of public health risks provided. | HF2009-Ward (DFL) E-12 Education General Educational Development diplomas awarded to World War II veterans. | HF2021-Brynaert (DFL) E-12 Education Office of Educational Accountability funding provided through the University of Minnesota, measurement experts convened to consider how school performance report card data are most usefully displayed. |
| HF1986-Tschumper (DFL) Health & Human Services Atrazine state standards levels required to meet federal standards. | HF1998-Loeffler (DFL) Health & Human Services Continuing care provisions, data practices, long-term care provisions and other human services provisions modified. | HF2010-Sailer (DFL) Finance Elementary sparsity revenue minimum qualifying mileage level lowered from 19 to 17 miles to increase the number of eligible schools. | HF2022-Erickson (R) E-12 Education Department of Education required to report on how productively time is used in public schools. |
| HF1987-Huntley (DFL) Health & Human Services Minnesota Medical Information Council established. | HF1999-Slocum (DFL) Health & Human Services Health and auto insurance reimbursement required for emergency care provided by first responders. | HF2011-Hornstein (DFL) E-12 Education Expansion of the rites of passage program funding authorized as a way to narrow the racial achievement gap and program evaluation required. | HF2023-Erickson (R) E-12 Education Advisory task force to consider and recommend a redesign of middle schools convened. |
| HF1988-Abeler (R) Finance Nursing facility private pay resident rates modified. | HF2000-Tschumper (DFL) Health & Human Services State direct contracting with providers for health care delivery expanded, and service delivery by prepaid health plans eliminated. | HF2012-Otremba (DFL) E-12 Education Non-public schools allowed to participate in the limited English proficiency program. | HF2024-Davnie (DFL) E-12 Education Private student transportation services contracting procedures and standards developed; grant program established. |
| HF1989-Dill (DFL) Health & Human Services County-based purchasing health plan proposal approved for certain counties. | HF2001-Murphy, E. (DFL) Health & Human Services Prenatal drug exposure in babies born in Minnesota study required. | HF2013-McFarlane (R) E-12 Education Reserve accounts eliminated in a school district general fund. | HF2025-Greiling (DFL) E-12 Education Families with adolescents educational support pilot program established. |
| HF1990-Ruud (DFL) Health & Human Services Adverse health care events reporting provisions modified. | HF2002-Eken (DFL) Finance Mahnom County group residential housing supplemental rate provided. | HF2014-McFarlane (R) E-12 Education Superintendent duties modified to eliminate basic standards test reporting requirement. | HF2026-Faust (DFL) Health & Human Services Social worker license issuance required under certain circumstances. |
| HF1991-Loeffler (DFL) Health & Human Services Human services technical changes provided; and child care, chemical and mental health, child welfare, public assistance, continuing care and health care provisions modified. | HF2003-Huntley (DFL) Health & Human Services Diagnostic Imaging Services Advisory Committee and moratorium on preauthorizing programs established. | HF2015-McFarlane (R) Finance Special education statutory funding provisions modified. | HF2027-Norton (DFL) Health & Human Services Physical therapists licensing requirements modified and penalties imposed. |
| HF1992-Thissen (DFL) Health & Human Services Pediatric specialty hospital inpatient and outpatient reimbursement at actual cost required. | HF2004-Atkins (DFL) Finance Communities for a Lifetime Initiative funding provided. | HF2016-McFarlane (R) E-12 Education Statewide testing and reporting system modified; graduation test requirements for certain students modified. | HF2028-Davnie (DFL) E-12 Education Early retirement incentive created for school district employees for school districts experiencing declining enrollment. |
| HF1993-Thissen (DFL) Health & Human Services Human services program integrity improvements provided; and public assistance overpayments, public assistance declarations, workers' compensation data and commissioner's subpoena authority modified. | HF2005-Ruud (DFL) Finance Kinship navigator program established for grandparents and relatives raising related children. | HF2017-McFarlane (R) Finance Extended time revenue modified. | HF2029-Dettmer (R) Finance Basic general education revenue amounts uniform increase proposed. |
| HF1994-Tingelstad (R) Health & Human Services Post-adoption search services registry created. | HF2006-Morrow (DFL) E-12 Education School purchase of locally produced food pilot grant program established. | HF2018-McFarlane (R) Finance Educational Planning and Assessment program funding provided. | HF2030-Dettmer (R) Finance Uniform increase in the basic general education revenue amounts proposed. |
| HF1995-Sailer (DFL) Finance Independent School District No. 38, Red Lake, declining pupil unit aid provided. | HF2007-Pelowski (DFL) E-12 Education No Child Left Behind Act implementation nullified. | HF2019-Erickson (R) E-12 Education First and second grade students with disabilities required to take reading diagnostic assessment. | HF2031-Buesgens (R) Finance Eligibility for extended time revenue clarified. |

Tuesday, March 13

HF2032-Dittrich (DFL)

Finance

Technology and library media aid for school districts established.

HF2033-Slawik (DFL)

Finance

Hennepin and Ramsey counties licensed family child care providers connections increased.

HF2034-Mariani (DFL)

E-12 Education

Charter school provisions modified.

HF2035-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Minnesota Board of Social Work Practice Act adopted.

HF2036-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Social work licensing provisions modified.

HF2037-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Social worker temporary license provided under certain conditions.

HF2038-Otremba (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Adult foster care and family adult day services license requirements modified.

HF2039-Nornes (R)

Health & Human Services

Medical practice orders for discipline modified.

HF2040-Madore (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Health care provider disclosure of financial interests required.

HF2041-Huntley (DFL)

Finance

Duluth nursing facility payment rates increased to the seven-county metropolitan median rates.

HF2042-Hosch (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Minnesota Family Investment Program advisory task force established.

HF2043-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Professional clinical counselors licensing established, and mental health professionals definitions modified.

HF2044-Kahn (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Human papilloma virus vaccine and cervical cancer study required.

HF2045-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Petroleum products specifications updated and term definitions modified.

HF2046-Nelson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Firefighters defined as essential employees.

HF2047-Mullery (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Workers' compensation coverage for mental injury caused by mental stress provided.

HF2048-Kranz (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

School buses and Head Start buses inspection provided by certified inspectors.

HF2049-Nelson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Mechanical Systems council and mechanical trade licensing requirements established.

HF2050-Kahn (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota Humanities Commission funding provided.

HF2051-Beard (R)

Finance

Biomass fuel supply depot located in Scott or LeSueur counties grant provided.

HF2052-Atkins (DFL)

Taxes

Seasonal recreational property tax refund provided.

HF2053-Mahoney (DFL)

Finance

Deaf students summer youth program funding provided.

HF2054-Gardner (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Waste management provisions modified.

HF2055-Doty (DFL)

Finance

Special motor vehicle disabled veteran license plates authorized.

HF2056-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Financial institutions charges, expenses, electronic financial terminals and investments regulated.

HF2057-Madore (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Department of Administration designated as the lead agency relating to the Assistive Technology Act of 1998.

HF2058-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Foreign operating corporations repealed, foreign royalties subtraction eliminated, election authorized to include foreign entities in combined report and foreign dividend deduction modified.

HF2059-Dill (DFL)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Ely local sales and use tax authorized.

HF2060-Brynaert (DFL)

Taxes

Blue Earth County courts facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2061-Atkins (DFL)

Finance

Baseball fields with disabilities access funding provided.

HF2062-Hamilton (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Grain Inspection, Weighing, Sampling, and Analysis Act repealed.

HF2063-Mullery (DFL)

Higher Education &

Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

False or fraudulent academic document or credential use or manufacture prohibited.

HF2064-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Surplus real property disposition process modified.

HF2065-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State goods and services procurement provisions modified.

HF2066-Kahn (DFL)

Finance

Building replacement fund established.

HF2067-Hornstein (DFL)

Finance

Linden Hills Power and Light community digester and neighborhood district heating and cooling demonstration project grant provided.

HF2068-Jaros (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota Film and TV Board funding provided.

HF2069-Hausman (DFL)

Taxes

Film production income tax credit provided.

HF2070-Simon (DFL)

Taxes

Dependent care income tax credit for licensed family day care providers equalized.

HF2071-Simon (DFL)

Taxes

Federal nutrition program reimbursements federal taxable income subtraction provided.

HF2072-DeLaForest (R)

Taxes

Charitable gambling taxes repealed.

HF2073-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Emissions reporting and permitting required relating to electric generation facilities.

HF2074-Kahn (DFL)

Finance

Relative homesteads registration required, University of Minnesota area neighborhood alliance funding provided.

HF2075-Cornish (R)

Environment & Natural Resources

Night vision goggles prohibited while hunting.

HF2076-Brod (R)

Taxes

Alternative minimum tax repealed.

HF2077-Magnus (R)

Finance

NextGen Energy Board established and renewable energy technology funding provided.

HF2078-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minnesota State Retirement System general plan membership authorized for middle management association employees.

HF2079-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee early retirement incentive eligibility extended.

Wednesday, March 14

HF2080-Slawik (DFL)

E-12 Education

Electronic Library for Minnesota access provided.

HF2081-Anzelc (DFL)

Finance

Retired school district employee health benefits authorization provision modified.

HF2082-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice

Alcohol abstinence restrictions provisions modified relating to driver's licenses.

HF2083-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor

Prevailing wage law enforcement and remedies provided.

HF2084-Thissen (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice

Parking regulation petty misdemeanor violation modified.

HF2085-Mariani (DFL)
E-12 Education

Quantum opportunities program funding provided.

HF2086-Cornish (R)
Finance

Marginal cost pupil units and equalized debt service levy calculation modified.

HF2087-Gottwalt (R)
E-12 Education

Developmental screening program information required to include the right to refuse screening based on conscientiously held beliefs.

HF2088-Bly (DFL)
E-12 Education

Interdisciplinary teaching and learning program model authorized, and teaching license provided.

HF2089-Hackbarth (R)
Finance

Pupil unit count increased for certain growing school districts.

HF2090-Ward (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Backflow prevention in recreational camping areas requirements limited.

HF2091-Huntley (DFL)
Finance

Medical assistance funds transfer provided.

HF2092-Simpson (R)
Taxes

New York Mills wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2093-Anderson, B. (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Clearwater local sales and use tax authorized.

HF2094-Koenen (DFL)
Finance

Renewable energy grants for schools and public buildings provided.

HF2095-Eastlund (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Peace officer reciprocity licensing exam eligibility criteria modified to include persons in active military service.

HF2096-Eastlund (R)
Taxes

Homestead of disabled veteran property tax valuation exclusion provided.

HF2097-Gardner (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division

Cold weather rule provided for public utilities relating to disconnections during winter.

HF2098-Morrow (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Gaylord; Lakeview Nursing Home pension benefits provided upon privatization.

HF2099-Morrow (DFL)
Finance

Minnesota Historical Society grant-in-aid program provided for county and local historical societies.

HF2100-Clark (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Bisphenol-A and phthalates prohibited in products for young children.

HF2101-Cornish (R)
Finance

Faribault Soil and Water Conservation District funding provided.

HF2102-Hansen (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Lilydale food and beverage tax authorized.

HF2103-Simpson (R)
Taxes

Water and wastewater treatment facilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2104-Dill (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Cook County local lodging and admissions taxes authorized.

HF2105-Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services

Professional clinical counselor licensure requirements provided, and professional clinical counselors added as a professional service.

HF2106-Gottwalt (R)
Taxes

College savings plan contributions income tax subtraction provided.

HF2107-Masin (DFL)
Commerce & Labor

Telecommunications goals provided, and broadband policy director and advisory board established.

HF2108-Dettmer (R)
Taxes

Payment in lieu of taxes; town that incorporates into a city authorized to continue to receive certain payments.

HF2109-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Medical laboratory science professionals licensure and board established.

HF2110-Lieder (DFL)
Finance

Greater Minnesota transit funding provided.

HF2111-Hosch (DFL)
Finance

Workforce U; Minnesota Family Investment Program pilot program established.

HF2112-Anzelc (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Medical assistance payment rates increased for dental services provided to children and reports required.

HF2113-Moe (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State grants management provided.

HF2114-Clark (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Birth defects registry system data classified as private, informed consent required and public health nurse visit provided.

HF2115-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice

A resolution memorializing Congress to enact legislation to extend federal entitlement eligibility to unadjudicated individuals held in local facilities.

HF2116-Lieder (DFL)
Finance

Gross vehicle weights and axle weights of vehicles and combinations regulated, allowable weight limits and permit fees and requirements modified, and permits for certain vehicles and combinations authorized.

HF2117-Berns (R)
Finance

Administration Department funding provided for promotion of document imaging work to be done by persons with developmental disabilities.

HF2118-Norton (DFL)
Health & Human Services

Smoking prohibited near entrances to public places.

HF2119-DeLaForest (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Campaign finance reporting requirements specified, and carryforward allowance for certain county commissioner and city council candidates limited.

HF2120-Hornstein (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources

Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport flight path air quality study provided.

HF2121-Laine (DFL)
Taxes

Fridley tax increment financing district authorized.

HF2122-Brod (R)
Taxes

Homeowners property tax refund maximum removed and income phase-out implemented for the special refund.

HF2123-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Finance

Concordia University Hmong Studies Center historical preservation grant provided.

HF2124-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Correctional employee disability benefit provisions and age limits modified, and terms defined.

HF2125-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Retirement filing deadlines extended, written applications required and disability benefit provisions modified.

HF2126-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Public pension plan full funding dates established.

HF2127-Clark (DFL)
Finance

Metropolitan Economic Development Association funding provided.

HF2128-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Public Employees Retirement Association staff authorized to participate in the post-retirement option.

HF2129-Wardlow (R)**Taxes**

Eagan tax increment financing district authorized.

HF2130-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association general plan late application for disability benefits authorized for a former employee.

HF2131-Urdahl (R)**Taxes**

Meeker County electrical cooperative sales tax exemption restriction eliminated.

HF2132-Gottwalt (R)**Taxes**

Income tax check-offs provided for education, health care and state parks.

HF2133-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Pre-commitment detention of persons costs state's share funding provided.

HF2134-Simon (DFL)**Finance**

Sexual abuse against a minor civil actions limitation period clarified.

HF2141-Dominguez (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Eviction records expungement required after one year.

HF2142-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Property tax class rates modified, rural woodlands classification provided, seasonal recreational property tax deferral program established, market value exclusions provided and monthly payments authorized.

HF2143-Simon (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Kinship support program provided for grandparents and relatives caring for related children.

HF2144-Gardner (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Ombudsman for water pollution education and assistance position created in the Pollution Control Agency.

HF2145-Atkins (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Open meeting law requirements expanded, terms defined, serial meetings violation specified and electronic communications added to open meeting requirements.

HF2146-Wardlow (R)**Health & Human Services**

Nonpublic assistance IV-D services provisions modified.

HF2147-Bly (DFL)**Finance**

Office of Enterprise Technology funding provided for grants to counties participating in the development of the integrated financial system.

HF2148-Clark (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Minneapolis schools fragrance-free pilot project created.

HF2149-Lenczewski (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County nursing facility property payment rate increased.

HF2150-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

Low-income rental housing required to participate in the crime free multi-housing program to receive a reduced property tax class rate.

HF2151-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota State High School League rules subjected to the Administrative Procedure Act.

HF2152-Bly (DFL)**Finance**

Higher education facilities authority revenue bond authority increased.

HF2153-Smith (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Fraudulent identification cards unlawful acts penalties provided.

HF2154-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Finance**

Low referendum school district funding increased.

HF2155-Hackbarth (R)**Finance**

Elk River Economic Development Authority; plasma gasification of waste into methanol for biodiesel production process study funding provided.

HF2156-Wagenius (DFL)**Taxes**

Incandescent light bulbs excise tax imposed.

HF2157-Madore (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Special transportation and access transportation services broker use prohibited.

HF2158-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

International Adoption Project funding provided.

HF2159-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Care coordination for children with high-cost medical conditions required through the U special kids program.

HF2160-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Faribault County nursing facility rate increase provided.

HF2161-Cornish (R)**Finance**

Methamphetamine treatment programs funding provided.

HF2162-Gunther (R)**Health & Human Services**

Adolescent residential treatment center study required.

HF2163-Hortman (DFL)**Taxes**

Sales tax base expanded and rate reduced, and low income tax credit provided.

HF2164-Hausman (DFL)**Taxes**

Group term life insurance contracts exempted from the premiums tax.

Thursday, March 15

HF2135-Loeffler (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission provisions modified.

HF2136-Gottwalt (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Prevailing wage provisions modified.

HF2137-Sailer (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Petroleum inspection fee use for weatherization assistance authorized.

HF2138-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Licensed professional counselors fees modified, and licensed professional clinical counselor fee established.

HF2139-Mahoney (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Electricians extra unemployment benefits provided.


HF2140-Madore (DFL)**Taxes**

Metropolitan transit taxing district redefined, and tax levy outside existing transit taxing district authorized.

Elections continued from page 17

People with disabilities are considered vulnerable adults, and there is always the possibility published information will be spread widely in blogs and through other publications, she said.

Other provisions of the bill include:

- groups conducting voter registration drives would be prohibited from paying employees on a per card basis or using a strict quota;
- election judges could not process absentee ballots until noon on Election Day;
- the Office of the Secretary of State would be required to send voter registration and election judge information to newly naturalized citizens;
- the time frame for districts using mail balloting would be changed from between 20 and 14 days before an election to 30 and 14 days; and
- individuals, except election judges and those waiting to register to vote, would be prohibited from standing within 100 feet of a building in which a polling place is located. 

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Not working for a livin'

| | |
|--|---------|
| Unemployment rate in Minnesota in January 2007, as percent..... | 5.4 |
| In United States, as percent..... | 5.0 |
| Average rate in Minnesota in 2006..... | 4.0 |
| In United States, as percent..... | 4.6 |
| Job vacancies in Minnesota during the fourth quarter of 2006 | 55,250 |
| Decrease, as percent, from one year prior | 9 |
| Job vacancy rate in seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, in December 2006..... | 1.9 |
| Rate in Greater Minnesota..... | 2.3 |
| Percent of all job vacancies located in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area..... | 64.3 |
| Year the Unemployment Insurance program was created to provide workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own a partial wage replacement to assist them in becoming reemployed | 1936 |
| Estimated number of Minnesotans who received benefits in 2006..... | 175,000 |
| Total amount received, in millions..... | \$680 |
| Increase from 2005, in millions..... | \$25 |
| Average weekly amount received by an applicant in 2006..... | \$357 |
| Weeks that the average applicant collected benefits | 15 |
| Of those unemployed in 2006, approximate percent who were temporarily or seasonally unemployed and returned to their employer..... | 50 |
| Approximate number of individuals on "active status" in January 2007 | 100,000 |
| Benefits payments that month, in millions, as approximate..... | \$100 |
| Approximate percent increase in payments as compared to October 2006..... | 300 |
| Percent of 2006 applicants who applied online | 41 |
| Percent in 2005 | 35 |
| Millions of benefit payments made in 2006..... | 1.3 |
| Estimated unemployment trust fund balance at the end of 2006, in millions..... | \$700 |
| Fund balance recommended by the legislative auditor, in billions | \$1.4 |
| Employers, as approximate, subject to the payroll tax in 2006 that is used to fund the benefits program..... | 125,000 |
| Millions they paid, as estimate..... | \$940 |
| Increase over 2005, in millions..... | \$45 |
| Percent of employers who paid their unemployment insurance taxes online in 2006..... | 73 |
| Percent in 2005 | 27 |
| Estimated millions of administrative savings by using debit cards and increased use of direct deposit versus issuing checks | \$1 |

— M. COOK

Sources: [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), including 2006 Report from the [Unemployment Insurance Program](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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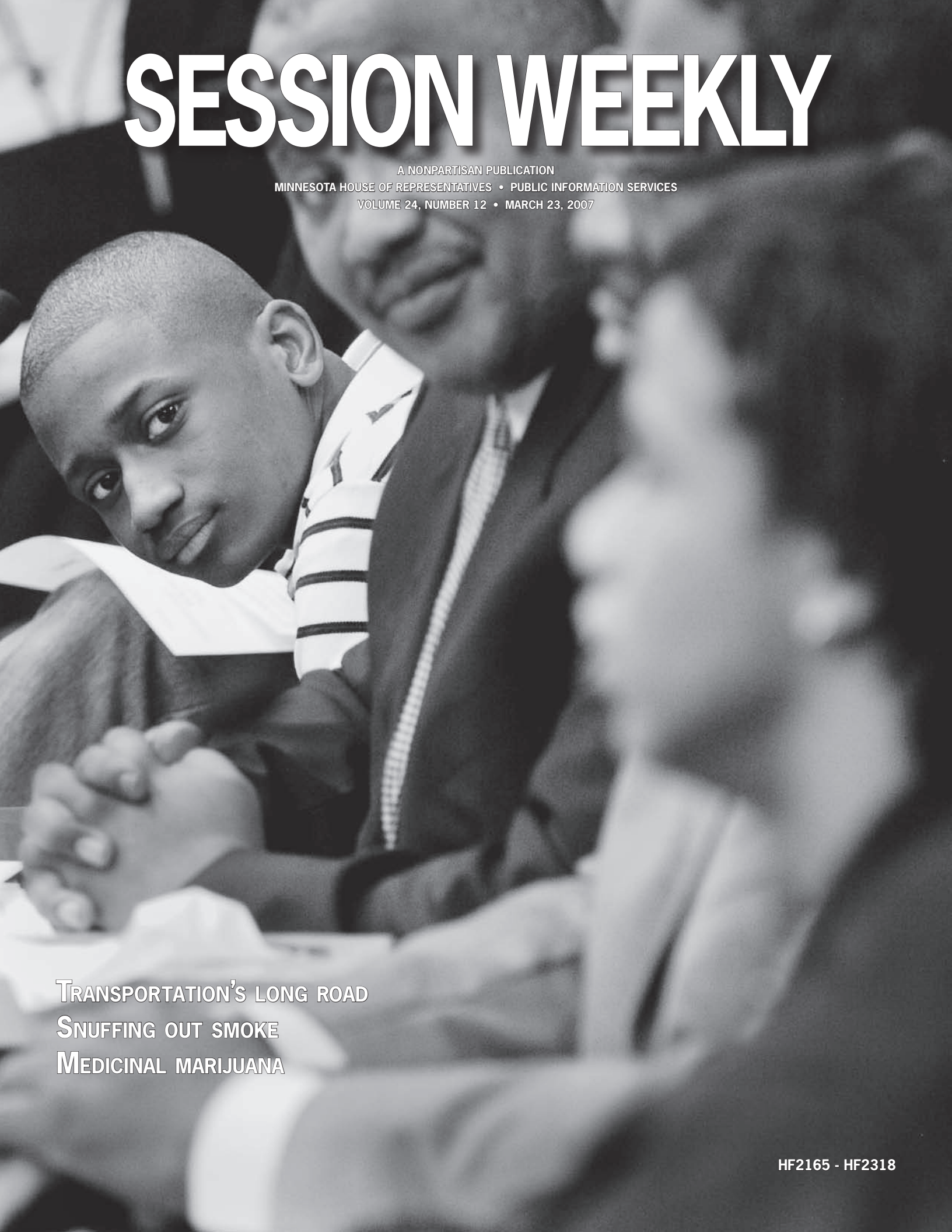
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TRANSPORTATION'S LONG ROAD
SNUFFING OUT SMOKE
MEDICINAL MARIJUANA

SESSION WEEKLY

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FEATURES

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On the cover: Jonathon Ross, *left*, watches as fellow Minneapolis North Community High School student Denzell Allen, *right*, tells the House E-12 Education Committee about his participation in the Summit Academy Quantum Opportunities Program. Louis J. King, II, president and CEO of the academy, *center* and Minneapolis North Community High School Principal Mike Favor, *right*, also testified before the committee.

— Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

A declining problem

Number of bills look to help with funding concerns

BY STEPHEN HARDING

School districts across the state are struggling with declining enrollment and the loss of state funding. For administrators, that means stretching budgets further, resulting in staff cuts and building closures.

For every student lost, a school district relinquishes a minimum of \$4,974 from the education funding formula. When considering other revenue received from the government, such as for transportation, free and reduced lunches, and funds for teaching limited English learners, this averages out to \$6,704 per student.

From 1979 to 1985, there was a steady drop in enrollment across the state, but since then enrollment has been on a roller coaster ride. Nearly 80 percent of school districts in the state are losing students to charter schools, home

schools, private schools, students moving to other districts and a declining birth rate.

The problem is greatest in northeast Minnesota, where 90 percent of the districts are losing students. In the Twin Cities

metropolitan area, the number is around 60 percent, according to the nonpartisan House Fiscal Analysis Department.

Overall, the state is projected to lose 22,013 students during the next two years.

Regardless of a district's locale, administrators are faced with making undesirable choices — but ones that need to be made.

Tightening the budget

The largest portion of the school budget is teacher compensation. So when budgets need to be tightened, the first to go are teachers. Due to contract terms, new teachers are cut first, but the problem is that they are not paid as much as their longer-serving counterparts.

According to www.iseek.org/mncareers/index.html, an average starting wage for an elementary teacher is \$31,030. For every six students lost to a district, one teacher may be cut.

When there is a rapid loss of students over a period of a few years, teachers lose their

First Reading continued on page 4



Photo courtesy of A. J. Olmscheid

Students at Mounds View High School in Arden Hills funnel through the hallways between classes. The Mounds View District faces a similar situation to many districts across the state — a declining enrollment.

jobs and schools can be closed or combined, making transportation more costly because of longer routes and increased class sizes. As a result, teaching effectiveness goes down.

Metro woes

The Mounds View School District is a typical suburban school district in that it is losing students, but what is atypical is the rate at which it is losing students: 1,166 over the past five years. The 10 percent decline is the largest among the 50 suburban school districts.

"We have had to consolidate schools," said Superintendent Jan Witthuhn. "We had eight elementary schools two years ago, and we closed two of them."

Mounds View turned those buildings, which housed 650 students each, into administrative offices and community service facilities. The district has also instituted what Witthuhn calls a "controversial marketing effort" to retain and attract new students.

It's helped; however, there are just more students graduating than entering kindergarten, she said. Declining birth rates in the suburbs is to blame, and not children attending home or charter schools, she said.

Greater Minnesota concerns

The McGregor School District is roughly 30 miles northeast of Mille Lacs Lake.

Its population ranges from isolated homesteads and cluster communities with 50 to 350 people, according to a fact sheet provided by its school board.

McGregor is one of the poorest districts in the state, with the average per capita income of \$21,000. The unemployment rate is almost twice the state average, and 63 percent of students qualify for free and reduced lunches.

The district educated 550 students in 1998-99. It now has approximately 425 students, and next year enrollment could drop to 360 due to the College of St. Scholastica opening a nearby charter school as well as other factors.

Adding it all up, McGregor could lose \$345,825 if all 45 students leave for the charter school. However, a bill has been introduced to deal with the problem.

Sponsored by [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), [HF349](#) would appropriate \$400,000 in the next biennium to offset the loss of funds due to the loss of students. The House K-12 Finance Division laid the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF419](#), Sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), has been laid over for possible inclusion in the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division.

Superintendent Rich Herman said his district still has to make cuts in the budget, "but this bill would help bridge the gap in funding."

Other solutions

The state uses a formula to ease the burden of declining enrollment by taking the greater of either a district's current year adjusted pupil units, or the sum of 77 percent of its current year's adjusted pupil units plus 23 percent of the previous year's adjusted pupil units.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), [HF694](#) would take a four-year average of the districts adjusted pupil units to calculate the formula. The cost of this bill would be around \$90 million a year.

School districts that are losing students

would see a rise in funding levels from this bill. However, schools that see a rise in enrollment would receive no extra funding and some would be worse off because they have a big decline under current law, but may have remained relatively stable over a four-year average, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department.

McGregor would see a \$90,000 a year gain and Mounds View would see a nearly \$4 million gain if the bill would pass.


Its companion bill, [SF1344](#), sponsored by Sen.

Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan) awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The bill has been laid over by the House K-12 Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion, as has [HF1411](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker). Its companion bill, [SF1571](#), sponsored by Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Howes' bill would give an advantage to small schools that are suffering from declining enrollment through a revenue increase that would equal 20 percent of the basic formula allowance times the two-year decline in enrollment limited to no more than 100 students, times a small school index. The index would be the current enrollment divided by 1,000. If enrollment is over 1,000 then the school index is 1.

The cost of the bill would be roughly \$22 million per year.

Because McGregor is projected to lose 35 students over the next two years, the formula would provide \$78,243. Mounds View, which stands to lose 949 students over the next two years, would receive \$99,949. 

Frequently called numbers

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House Public Information Services

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House Index

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Committee Hotline, House 296-9283

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Senate Sergeant-at-Arms

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Senate Counsel & Research

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Legislative Reference Library

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Revisor of Statutes

700 State Office Building 296-2868

Governor's Office

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held March 15-22 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and * bill the governor signed or vetoed.

AGRICULTURE

Farmer funding assistance

Planting season is right around the corner; but a program farmers, especially new farmers, look to for help funding their operations is out of money.

That situation could change with [HF274](#), sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar).

The [Rural Finance Authority](#) partners with local lenders to provide affordable credit to eligible farmers at a reduced interest rate. During the fiscal year 2006, more than \$14.7 million was loaned out through the program, effectively depleting its resources in July. As a result, the authority is unable to accept applications for five of its programs.

The bill, approved by the House Finance Committee March 19 awaits action on the House floor, and would appropriate \$30 million for the program.

Juhnke's initial request was for \$15 million, which was amended to \$50 million in the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division by [Rep. Tim Faust](#) (DFL-Mora). The \$30 million compromise was reached in the House Capital Investment Finance Division.

A companion bill, [SF227](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), passed the Senate 64-0 on March 7 and was laid on the table.

— L. SCHUTZ

BONDING

Bonding in the off year

Minnesota's public colleges and universities could see funding for much-needed building repairs if a House bonding bill passes. A combined \$52 million would go to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for asset preservation and replacement.

Sponsored by [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the \$255 million bonding bill ([HF886](#)) was approved by the House Capital Investment

Finance Division, the House Finance Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee during a three-day span beginning March 20. It is now headed to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF844](#), sponsored by [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Of the total, \$135 million is bonded money and \$120 million is onetime money from the state's General Fund.

The Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center would receive \$30 million of its \$37.9 million request to build the first arena in the world with an environmental design certification. The arena would be used by the mens and womens hockey programs at [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#) and would be used for concerts and other city and regional events. It would include 7,000 seats for hockey games and more than 8,500 seats for concerts.

Other appropriations include:

- \$30 million for a capital loan to the Red Lake School District to design, construct, renovate, furnish and equip school facilities, and for health and safety capital improvements;
- \$30 million for the final design and construction of the Central Corridor transitway between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul;
- \$12.7 million from the trunk highway fund for exterior repair of the Department of Transportation Building in St. Paul;
- \$10 million to assist noncommercial television stations with the continued conversion to a digital broadcast signal as mandated by the federal government. It must also be used to interconnect Minnesota public television stations;
- \$8 million for the Reinvest in Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to acquire conservation easements from landowners on marginal lands to protect soil and water quality and to support fish and wildlife habitat. Of this, \$2.25 million is to implement the program;
- \$2.5 million for the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board to construct siphons, a conveyance system and other improvements to accommodate water level and outflow control of the water level in the Canisteo mine pit in Itasca County; and
- \$2.1 million for the state share of land acquisition, engineering and design costs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers East Division Flood Control Project, which will protect Roseau from recurring flooding. This would also go for flood mitigation projects in Browns Valley.

— S. HEGMAN

No Session Weekly April 6

In observance of Passover and Easter, there will be no House floor sessions or committee hearings after 2 p.m. Monday, April 2 through Monday, April 9.

Because of this, there will be no Session Weekly published Friday, April 6. Session Weekly staff will resume coverage of the House with committees and a floor session scheduled for April 10. The magazine will then resume its regular Friday publication date.

St. Cloud hockey could 'shine'

Another prominent hockey center could see improvements.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), [HF348](#) would appropriate \$11 million to add and renovate space at the National Hockey Center in St. Cloud. The bill was held over March 15 by the House Capital Investment Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

"This is a jewel and it's time to shine it up," Haws said.

The total project cost is \$13 million. The additional \$2 million would be raised by St. Cloud State University from private sources.

The project totals about 36,000 square feet, and 7,000 square feet of renovation. This will include a handicapped-accessible entrance and lobby, ticketing area, training space, expanded concourse, coaches' offices, additional spectator and reception space, and renovated space for additional locker rooms.

Predesign for the project is complete, so the design phase could begin immediately, said Steve Ludwig, vice president for administrative affairs at the university.

Since its opening in 1989, the building has been home to the university's mens and womens hockey programs, St. John's University intercollegiate hockey, academic and intramural sports programs, high school hockey, youth hockey practice and tournaments, recreation, national hockey festivals and development camps, and coaching and officiating clinics.

A companion bill, [SF292](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), was laid over Feb. 22 by the Senate Finance Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HEGMAN

BUDGET

Targets include new tax tier

House finance committees are meeting into the night to work out budget proposals, and get them out of committee by the upcoming

April 2 deadline.

The jumpstart to activity came after the House Ways and Means Committee approved a more than \$34.6 billion spending target for the 2008-09 biennium on March 16.

Sponsored by [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), committee chairman, [HCR2](#) lays out funding proposals for the House DFL priorities, including: increasing the per-pupil school formula; movement toward all-day kindergarten; property tax relief; and health care coverage for all of the state's children. There is no Senate companion.

Early in the session, the House Ways and Means Committee held hearings across the state. The targets address the concerns of Minnesotans, Solberg said. "Those themes, no matter what part of the state we were in, rose to the top."

K-12 education is the greatest beneficiary with \$13.7 billion in biennial funding.

Transportation could become the most controversial spending target as the session moves along. There is significant difference in the proposals among the House, at approximately \$230 million, the governor's \$335.6 million proposal and the Senate's target of \$64 million. The House relies on a 5-cent a gallon tax increase in each of the next two fiscal years, which [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) said Republicans are being "coerced" into voting for.

"They're coerced because you are starving the transportation fund from the money that Gov. Pawlenty is putting into it," the former speaker said.

A new revenue generator could be controversial as well.

The House DFL Caucus is endorsing a fourth tax tier. Under the proposal, a married couple netting more than \$400,000 a year, and a single person netting \$226,000 or more, would be in a 9 percent tax bracket.

[House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the money raised would be strictly for property tax relief across the state.

Other revenue could come from closing tax loopholes from Foreign Operating Corporations and greater enforcement of tax compliance.

The House spending targets are about \$126 million more than those proposed by the governor. The Senate's budget proposal is more in line with that of the governor.

— L. SCHUTZ

BUSINESS

Snuffing out smoking

The Freedom to Breathe Act, which would prohibit smoking in restaurants, bars and public transportation statewide, has overcome one more committee hurdle, with its March 15

SILENT VIGIL



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A Capitol visitor reads a story about 1st Lt. Michael Fasnacht that was attached to a pair of boots during a March 19 peace vigil in the Rotunda. Fasnacht, of Mankato, died June 8, 2005, when the vehicle he was driving hit a roadside bomb while he was on patrol in Iraq. Forty-seven pairs of boots, one pair for each Minnesotan who has died in Iraq, were placed around the Star of the North.

approval by the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division.

It now awaits action by the House Finance Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF305](#) was characterized as a public safety issue by proponents, who said the ban would provide protection for hospitality employees currently at the mercy of secondhand smoke on the job.

"The goal is to even the playing field across the state," said [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids). "Workers have a right to a healthy, hazard-free work area."

Opponents argued that while science has deemed secondhand smoke dangerous, it has not concluded whether ventilation systems installed at many restaurants and bars are ineffective safeguards.

"The debate is not over," said Sue Jeffers, owner of Stub and Herb's Bar and Restaurant in Minneapolis. She said that all 15 states with smoking bans have included certain exemptions for businesses or other entities.

The committee had earlier defeated an amendment to excuse restaurants and bars with ventilators from the ban.

Several Republican committee members said they opposed the bill because it would negate the right of choice for business owners.

"Minnesota should stay out of the private industry, and let the consumer drive the demand on this," [Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton) said.

A companion bill, [SF238](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), is scheduled to be heard March 24 by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

CONSUMERS

Cold Belgian brews and more

Strong beers brewed in Minnesota, like Schell and Summit brands, could be available this year for beer drinkers at the Minnesota State Fair.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF1958](#), the omnibus liquor bill, would allow liquor licenses to be sold to establishments within a half-mile of the state fairgrounds and at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. Other provisions allow for larger bottles for brewing beer, on-sale licenses for farm wineries and increased maximum fees for off-sale licenses issued by cities. The bill was approved March 20 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee, and is headed for the House floor.

Under the bill, vendors would be permitted to sell more than 3.2 percent beer at the state fair and other fairground events, "provided that at least one Minnesota brewed malt liquor is made available for sale at each allowed location within the grounds."

Ken Thiemann, a brew master in Larsmont, along the North Shore, told a House committee

that under current law he would be unable to sell or serve his homemade Belgian beer in the traditional fashion because of current bottle size regulations. The bill would permit 750 milliliter bottles traditional to Belgian beers to be sold by small brewers and brew pubs.

It is currently illegal for liquor stores to donate bottles of wine to charities for events such as a silent auction. Under the bill, cities may issue to a nonprofit organization a temporary exclusive liquor store license once a year for charitable events. The funds from sales must be dedicated to the charitable purpose and the donation could not exceed five bottles for wine, 24 beer bottles and one liter for intoxicating liquors.

Not included in the bill is a provision allowing grocery stores to sell wine. The reason is because most of the provisions are noncontroversial. "Wine with dinner, no matter how you slice it, is highly controversial," Atkins said.

[Rep. Dean Simpson](#) (R-Perham), a grocery store owner, said he was disappointed the measure was left out. "It's a consumer's choice issue," and 33 other states allow it, he said. As a grocer, the problem of increased youth access is a fallacy because grocery stores are already responsible for selling wine coolers, cigarettes and lottery tickets, he said.

A companion bill, [SF1070](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Get a job, Sha na na ...

Would you be able to recognize original members of The Platters, The Drifters or The Coasters? Imposter bands performing as original members are out there and making money on performing the lie.

A Truth in Music Advertising Act, approved without opposition by the House Commerce and Labor Committee March 15, would make the act illegal. The bill now goes to the House floor. A companion bill, [SF1936](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF1314](#) would make any person who advertises or conducts a live musical performance or production by use of false, deceptive or misleading affiliation between a performing group and a recording group subject to misdemeanor charges.

The bill "gets after unethical concert promoters that take advantage of music fans," Atkins said. The attorney general or county attorney would be permitted to step in and stop a concert from happening.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Jon "Bowzer" Bauman, an original member of the band "Sha Na Na," sings before the House Commerce and Labor Committee March 15 while testifying in support of the Truth in Music Advertising Act that would adopt regulations for advertising and conducting of live musical performances or productions.

Jon "Bowzer" Bauman, an original member of the band Sha Na Na, and chairman of the Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation's Truth in Music Committee, said imposters are using a "sophisticated form of identity theft" and duping consumers. For the most part, it's the impersonating doo-wop groups that are taking advantage of fans. Because they didn't get a lot of television time, people don't recognize whether the bands actually have original members, he said.

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Computer theft punishment

A plan to toughen a penalty for computer theft has been booted up.

If a computer is stolen that contains any identity information about the user or any other person, the thief could face a felony charge, under [HF1053](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dave Olin](#) (DFL-Thief River Falls).

"As we're mostly aware, the computers nowadays probably inadvertently have Social Security numbers and all sorts of other things," Olin said. "This would make it a felony because that computer may be able to be used in identity theft efforts elsewhere by getting that information."

Approved March 19 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division and one day later by the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the bill now awaits action by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

"Computers oftentimes contain information that's much more damaging,

and much more useful to thieves, than just the laptop itself, which may only be worth a couple of hundred bucks in some cases," said Ben Wogsland, assistant director of communications with the attorney general's office. "It's difficult for prosecutors to get to the \$500 threshold for a felony in some cases. This just brings it to that threshold as we've done with some other property." According to statute, "other property" can include that taken "from an area of destruction caused by civil disaster, riot, bombing, or the proximity of the battle"; motor vehicles; and public funds belonging to the state or political subdivision.

Wogsland said it is his understanding that the bill would also address personal digital assistants, such as a BlackBerry or other handheld devices.

A companion bill, [SF727](#), sponsored by [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley), was held over March 7 by the Senate Public Safety Budget Division for omnibus bill consideration.

— M. COOK

No required polygraphs

If a woman is sexually assaulted, she may be asked to take a polygraph exam to validate her story. In some cases, the exam may even play a part in whether to proceed with an investigation.

[Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said this practice unfairly singles out sexual assault victims and treats them differently than other victims of crime.

Sponsored by Paymar, [HF1354](#) would prohibit law enforcement and prosecutors from requiring complainants of sexual assault

from having to take the exam. Initially, the bill said officials would not be allowed to ask about taking the exam. After hearing concerns from police officer representatives, Paymar successfully offered an amendment allowing them to do so.

The bill was approved March 20 by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee and was laid over for possible omnibus inclusion. There is no Senate companion.

Paymar also said when the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized by Congress in 2005, there was an added provision that any state requiring victims to take a polygraph would not be eligible for certain federal funds. Without this bill, the state may no longer receive up to \$2 million in federal assistance.

Eighty-five percent of all sexual assaults throughout the country go unreported and the practice of asking for polygraphs does nothing to help, said Rochester Police Chief Roger Peterson. It's hard enough to get victims to admit that a crime has occurred, Peterson said. "We don't need more barriers in the process."

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Electronic bullying

Bullying in the 21st century is no longer confined to the cafeteria or the playground. It now happens over the Internet and through text messaging.

A bill introduced would help address this problem.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF504/SF646](#)* would require school boards to develop a policy to prohibit bullying in all forms, including by electronic means.

On March 20, the House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House floor. The Senate passed the bill 61-2 on March 7.

Among the new ways of bullying is through Web sites that rank the least popular or ugliest student in school. Pictures and videos are also appearing on the Internet that are embarrassing or made to look like the victim is doing something illegal. "Things like these cause disruption in the school day," said Walter Roberts, professor of counselor education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

[Rep. Marsha Swails](#) (DFL-Woodbury) supports the bill, but worries that this could micromanage student behavior.

She struggles with trying to legislate something that is oftentimes an off-school event or activity. "We need to raise the consciousness and awareness of our parents

and students that this is going on," she said.

Student athletes are disciplined for behavior outside of the school day, such as for drinking or drug use. "The kid doesn't have to be caught with a beer in their locker if they're found with a beer at a party," said [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls). "That's an example of behavior outside of school that has consequences inside of school."

— S. HARDING

Flexible learning calendar

Minnesota students get nearly 13 weeks of summer vacation, but a proposed bill could slice that almost in half.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope), [HF443](#) would give \$3 million to the Department of Education to provide \$50,000 grants to school districts and charter schools that voluntarily operate a flexible learning calendar. The estimated cost of changing the calendar would be \$200 per student due to transportation and keeping schools cool during the summer time.

It was heard March 16 by the House K-12 Finance Division, no action was taken.

Supporters say that fewer weeks off would help student retention, and students falling behind could receive an extra week of help.

Charlie Kyte, executive director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, said that when Longfellow Elementary School in Rochester adopted

the calendar 10 years ago, a dramatic drop in discipline issues followed. In the first nine weeks of school, students tend not to misbehave, however, after that is when problems arise, he said.

Under the flexible scheduling plan, students would attend classes for nine weeks and then get three weeks of vacation. The number of days students attend school would stay the same. The school year would start in late-July and end the first week of June. Students would go to school for 45 days and then be off for 15 days.

A companion bill, [SF663](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate E-12 Education Budget Division.

— S. HARDING

Head Start help

Head Start helps families in need; now it could be receiving a helping hand from the state.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF894](#) would, in fiscal years 2008 and 2009, match the \$19.1 million the state already contributes to Head Start.

The House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division laid the bill over March 15 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The family-oriented program helps approximately 14,300 at-risk children with school readiness and social skills. The federal government contributed \$83 million

CELTIC CELEBRATION



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

In celebration of St. Patrick's Day, members of the Rosemount band "Legacy" perform an Irish jig in the House Chamber March 15.

to the Minnesota Head Start program in 2006, according to the Minnesota Head Start Association Web site.

In addition to serving more children, the additional money would allow Head Start to expand hours, days of service and address the needs of special populations through different teaching models.

To be eligible for Head Start, a family of four must meet the federal guideline of having an income of no more than \$20,000 a year. Ninety percent of program enrollment is reserved for families below the poverty line, and 10 percent is reserved for children with disabilities.

A companion bill, [SF734](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Funding for youth programming

Men Against Destruction Defending Against Drugs and Social-Disorders, like many community organizations providing youth programming, lost its state funding in the 2003 budget cuts.

Sponsored by [Rep. A. "Willie" Dominguez](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF580](#) would provide \$5.51 million to the Education Department for competitive grants to public and nonprofit groups providing youth enrichment programming after school and during non-school hours.

The House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division laid the bill over March 15 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Testifying on behalf of the bill was V.J. Smith, executive director of MAD DADS. "You can't sit a gang member down and just give them a job. They're like animals. You have to empower them," he said. "You have to teach them how to act. You have to teach them how to speak. You have to teach them how to be a productive citizen."

MAD DADS was founded in Omaha, Neb., in 1989 by 18 black fathers, and has grown to 60 chapters in 16 states. Minnesota MAD DADS was founded in 1998 in Minneapolis, and seeks \$500,000 for costs and youth programming. Along with empowering youth and street patrols, they host block parties, rallies, night parades and provide chaperones at community events.

A companion bill, [SF602](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Open enrollment rule changes

The [Minnesota State High School League](#) Representative Assembly adopted a rule March 16 that open-enrolled students would be ineligible for varsity athletic competition

for one year without a corresponding change of address.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF989](#) would overrule that change.

The House Disparities in Student Support and Service Subcommittee approved the bill March 19. The House K-12 Finance Division held the bill over two days later for possible omnibus bill inclusion. The bill will now go to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Hilstrom said concerns have been raised about coaches recruiting for "high-powered teams," but the league can't prove it. Because the league hasn't been able to punish coaches for the past five years, she said they are, instead, punishing students that open enroll.

Of the nearly 300,000 high school students in the state, more than 14,000 used open enrollment for the 2005-06 school year. Of those, 765 applied to participate in league-sponsored activities and would have been affected by the rule change, said Deputy Education Commissioner Chas Anderson.

League President Dave Stead said open enrollment is not the issue. "The problem is students that move from one place to another, and displace students that have grown up in the community and are looking forward to representing their school."

Not all students that transfer to a new school would have to sit out for a year.

In addition to students whose family moves to a new district, students that transfer in the ninth grade would be immediately eligible, as would a child ordered to move by a court, Stead said.

According to Stead, there is a provision in the bylaws that if a student open enrolls for better academics, yet wants to continue to participate in varsity athletics, he or she can "retain full eligibility for varsity competition for one (1) calendar year at the school where the student was enrolled prior to the transfer after which time the student shall become fully eligible at the school to which the student has open enrolled."

A companion bill, [SF1106](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), was tabled March 7 by the Senate Education Committee.

— S. HARDING

Quantum Opportunities Program

Some Minneapolis North Community High School students are at risk of failing a grade or dropping out of school.

Summit Academy Quantum Opportunities Program is providing a helping hand to these students.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St.

Paul), [HF2085](#) would appropriate \$750,000 in each year of the upcoming biennium for the program. The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 16. It will now go to the House K-12 Finance Division.

The program's goals are to help ninth- and 10th-graders improve academic achievement, pass the basic skills tests and put them on track to graduate.

There are 114 participants in the program. With extra funding, the program hopes to add 11 more students.

"When I first started the program I had a 1.2 GPA, and that was excessively low, in my opinion," said North High sophomore Denzell Allen. Now Allen has a 3.24 GPA and plans to attend Michigan State University to study biology. "It is not an hour to talk with your friends. I did some of that instead of my Algebra homework last year, and the instructors told me to leave," he said.

For upperclassmen, the program provides additional academic and social development experiences, assistance with post-secondary goals and information about possible scholarships.

A companion bill, [SF1746](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Recovering student transfers

Students who are in recovery-focused high schools will be allowed to participate in Minnesota State High School League-sponsored activities in their resident school district thanks to a new law sponsored by [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville), and [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka).

The law, signed March 21 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, allows students who have successfully completed a licensed treatment program to immediately participate in league activities in their home district even though they may be attending a recovery-focused school in another district.

Local school districts will still enforce penalties on those students for violating a league or district rule.

This law keeps students active in their sport, and they can go to a special school to help with their problem, [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) said.

[HF1425/SF1499](#)*/CH7

— S. HARDING

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

EMPLOYMENT

Conservation Corps cash

A plan to help youth who are deaf and hard of hearing was heard loud and clear by a House division.

The Minnesota Conservation Corps Summer Youth Program brings together youth ages 15-18 from across the state to learn about each other while performing natural resources and conservation projects, such as habitat improvement, planting activities and trail construction.

The corps is seeking \$38,000 for the upcoming biennium to hire deaf interpreters to assist with the program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF2053](#) was held over March 20 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion bill, [SF1803](#), sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Executive Director Len Price said the program typically gets six to eight deaf students each year, but would like to accept more. "For some, it's the first time they've ever had a job and gotten a paycheck. By having them be part of our crews, we need to have a signer or interpreter available. The proposal would cover the cost of the interpreter, and the small stipend we give our students."

For many of the participants, it is their first time being with a deaf student.

The request comes from an organization that once received state funding. In 2003, the Minnesota Conservation Corps became a nonprofit after being part of the Department of Natural Resources since 1991. "During the years it was part of the department, there were dollars appropriated to provide this assistance to hire interpreters and to help deaf students become part of the program," Price said.

"This is a fantastic program. It's a shame it got cut from being a state program," said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman. "It's a program that has really helped young people develop and expand their horizons."

— M. Cook

Making more money

On the eve of St. Patrick's Day, a House division gave approval to a bill that could put more green in people's pockets.

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) is sponsoring [HF456](#), which would increase the state's minimum wage for large employers to \$6.75 on Aug. 1 this year and \$7.75 one year later. For smaller employers, the rates would

be \$5.75 and \$6.75. The current rate is \$6.15 per hour for large employers, and \$5.25 per hour for small ones.

By statute, a large employer is "an enterprise whose annual gross volume of sales made or business done is not less than \$625,000."

Future increases would be indexed to the Consumer Price Index, as is currently done in eight other states.

Approved by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division March 16, and the House Commerce and Labor Committee March 20, the bill is headed to the House floor. A companion bill, [SF875](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

"We believe that a person who works full time, year-round should not be poor," said Brian Rusche, executive director of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition.

However, opponents said the bill could hurt small businesses, especially in Greater Minnesota.

Peggy Rasmussen, owner of Countryside Café in Hamel, said many smaller restaurants operate on slim profit margins, meaning prices would increase or jobs decrease.

She said many area seniors stop by her business for ice cream or pie and a beverage. "There's a limit to how much people are going to pay for a cup of coffee."

Others said the federal government is expected to increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 this year, and the state should not get ahead of that amount.

The bill would also eliminate the training wage that allows employers to pay \$4.90 per hour to employees under age 20 for their first 90 consecutive days of employment.

It's important to have the rate because many youngsters have to learn so many things, such as customer service, said Buzz Anderson, president of the Minnesota Retailers Association.

— M. Cook

Sick leave standards

According to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics, 59 percent of Minnesotans have paid sick leave at their place of employment.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF1334](#) would require all employers to provide at least one hour of sick leave for every 40 hours worked by an employee. A business that employs less than 10 people would have to provide one hour for every 80 hours worked.

The House Labor and Consumer Protection Division approved the bill March 16 and sent it to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

"Both large and small businesses say

that one of the greatest costs to them in the workplace is when employees show up sick and get other people sick and they lose productivity," Lesch said. "A modest plan ensuring a minimum paid sick days standard in Minnesota would save \$9.22 per worker per week. These savings would come from reduced turnover, lower productivity losses for sick workers on the job, avoiding relative short-term nursing home stays and a healthier work force."

A bus driver for First Student, Lyndie Ellenbaum does not get sick leave, nor does he have health insurance. He said an ailing employee can create a safety issue for the hundreds of youth he transports daily. "There are enough bad drivers out there, and I need to concentrate on avoiding them all day long and paying attention to the kids," he said.

Mike Hickey, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, said the marketplace should be allowed flexibility, fearing the bill could affect small employers "in a tough way."

A companion bill, [SF1324](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— M. Cook

ENVIRONMENT

No more 4x4 truck trails

[Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) says the [Department of Natural Resources](#) is planning a 4x4 truck trail near Bemidji, and he intends to stop it — and all other new 4x4 trails as well.

Moe sponsors [HF1127](#), which would prohibit the development of 4x4 truck trails on any state-administered land without legislative approval. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill March 19. Now it goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division.

Moe said the operation of 4x4 trucks causes soil erosion and other environmental damage. Noting that Minnesota already has certain areas specifically designed for these trucks, he argued that the state needs to "draw a line somewhere."

"We have a vested interest in preserving and protecting our public land, and I would argue that this is not what we want," he said.

Gene Larimore, a member of the Jack Pine Coalition, said 4x4 truck trails are "not compatible with the management of a sustainable forest."

Speaking in opposition to the bill, Garth Bergman, secretary of the Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive Association, said the bill would do

nothing to stop these trucks from illegally driving on state trails. Instead, he argued it would discourage lawful operation of the vehicles.

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) noted that previous trails were established using fees that 4x4 drivers are still paying in the hopes that more trails will be established.

"If I was on their end of the stick, I'd be pretty upset," Ozment said.

A companion bill, [SF1094](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Combating invasive species

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Bev Scalze](#) (DFL-Little Canada) would increase the surcharge added to watercraft license fees to help combat aquatic invasive species.

[HF2216](#) would create a variable surcharge depending on the type and size of watercraft. The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division held an informational hearing March 20 on the bill, which currently awaits action by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division.

Currently, watercraft license fees include a flat \$5 surcharge. Scalze's bill would increase it to \$25 for most boats, while the

surcharge for canoes and certain other types of watercraft would remain unchanged. Gov. Tim Pawlenty's [budget recommendations](#) propose a \$10 to \$15 surcharge, depending on the size of the boat.

Money raised by the surcharges would be used for prevention, control and treatment of aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian water milfoil, zebra mussels and spiny water flea.

Dick Osgood, secretary of Minnesota Waters, said that aquatic invasive species harm the state's lakes and rivers, and that state funding to deal with the problem has been inadequate.

"This increase is large — it certainly is. But we think it's small compared to the need," Osgood said.

Eric Lindberg, a volunteer for Minnesota Waters, said lake associations currently bear the brunt of the cost associated with dealing with invasive species, which also have a negative impact on property values.

Division chairwoman [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) expressed concern that it was unfair to raise the surcharge on all watercraft operators when only a few "scofflaws" were actually spreading the invasive species. Osgood replied that the alternatives are also unfair, and the current strategies aren't working.

A companion bill, [SF1994](#), sponsored by [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits

action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Mercury restrictions

When the Mercury Emissions Reduction Act of 2006 became law last year, it helped address Minnesota's mercury pollution problem. This year, [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) aims for more changes in the law.

Hortman sponsors [HF1316](#), which would regulate or restrict the sale, use and disposal of certain products containing mercury. Approved March 15 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, it now awaits action by the full House.

The bill would place a number of restrictions on products and devices containing mercury, including:

- banning the sale of certain medical devices, mercury switches and miscellaneous products containing mercury;
- requiring disposal of fluorescent lamps and light bulbs in a lamp recycling facility;
- banning the purchase, storage or use of elemental mercury and mercury-containing instruments in schools; and
- requiring products containing mercury to be clearly labeled as such.

Hortman said that fluorescent lamps and light bulbs alone are estimated to contribute as much as 173 pounds per year of environmental mercury pollution in the state.

Brad Buscher, chairman and CEO of Mercury Waste Solutions Inc., said not enough fluorescent lamps are disposed of properly through recycling.

"This bill will go a long way toward establishing the mechanisms which will allow for some accountability, which we currently don't have," Buscher said.

Buzz Anderson, president of the Minnesota Retailers Association, said he is concerned that the labeling requirements for fluorescent light bulbs could discourage people from buying them, which could be detrimental to energy conservation efforts in the state. (Fluorescent bulbs are generally more energy-efficient.)

"I want to make sure that what we do doesn't have the opposite effect of what we're trying to do, and that is to get people to buy these bulbs," Anderson said.

A companion, [SF1085](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), was referred to the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee March 22.

— N. BUSSE

Protecting wild rice

The cultivation and harvesting of wild rice has played an indispensable role in American

EXTRA JOLT



PHOTO BY TOM OLSCHIED

Dave Dombrowski, left, an electrician from Sartell, and other members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers filled the room for a March 20 meeting the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. Speakers told the committee about the abundance of electrician training programs in Minnesota, and how it is leading to unemployment for many of them. They also urged members to support a bill that would provide extra benefits to electricians.

Indian history in Minnesota, and a bill sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) aims to keep it that way.

Moe sponsors [HF1663](#), which would protect the state's native wild rice strains from genetic modification. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill March 15. It now goes to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. There is no Senate companion.

The bill would direct the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board to require an environmental impact statement before issuing a permit for any proposed release of genetically engineered wild rice. The board may also place conditions on the permit, as well as deny, modify, suspend or revoke it.

George Goggleye Jr., chairman of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Council, said wild rice is an essential part of his tribe's history — even part of their creation story.

"This is something that's very meaningful to us. To allow it to be genetically altered would be totally wrong. It would be disrespectful to the first people that inhabited this land," Goggleye said.

Tom Kelliher, representing the Biotechnology Industry Organization, said BIO has concerns that the bill would set a precedent that certain groups could prevent research into genetic engineering whenever they have a particular objection to it.

[Rep. Dave Olin](#) (DFL-Thief River Falls) refuted that notion. "This is a specific instance of a specific group of people that have a legitimate reason for wanting it to remain as it is. I don't think it sets any precedent whatsoever."

Moe amended the bill to include a study, to be prepared by the Department of Natural Resources, identifying threats to wild rice.

— N. BUSSE

FAMILY

Visitation rights for domestic partners

It will be up to the full House to decide if heterosexual or homosexual domestic partners can receive hospital visitation rights for their partners.

[Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) sponsor of [HF1589](#), said this would remove an ambiguity for hospital staff, who aren't currently required to permit domestic partners access to their loved ones during a health care crisis.

The bill was approved March 19 by the House Health and Human Services Committee.

"People in many communities are turned away because they are not blood related or married," said Ann DeGroot, executive director of OutFront Minnesota. "It's decided

UP, UP AND AWAY



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Former Rep. Kris Hasskamp displays a model of a proposed sculpture depicting the high-altitude balloon "Man High II" to members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee March 20 during testimony on a bill that would establish the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area Citizens Advisory Council.

hospital by hospital."

Several Republican committee members unsuccessfully offered amendments to stretch terminology used in the bill to include anyone — caregivers, friends and roommates who are emotionally attached and living with the patient.

"This shouldn't be limited to one set of people," said [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud). "I think we need to define this more broadly for all people that face this situation."

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) unsuccessfully sought a change from "domestic partners" to "significant individuals," saying the new language would encompass more relationships. His amendment would have required those under the bill to prove they lived full time with the patient.

Murphy and other Democrats said the change might confuse the issue.

"I think we need to use language that is understood by others," said [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls), arguing that "domestic partners" is a generally recognized term.

Those who oppose the legislation's original form criticized the resistance.

"The one way to make this issue less divisive was rejected," [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said. "It seems to me that the bread-and-butter issues for the majority of Minnesotans are not reflected in this bill."

The bill's companion, [SF1398](#), sponsored by [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee March 21.

— M. SIMPSON

GOVERNMENT

Criminals need not apply

Those who have been convicted or had a civil judgment rendered against them for certain offenses would be ineligible to bid for state contracts, under a bill approved March 20 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano), [HF729](#) would prohibit commissioners and government agencies from entering into contracts with those convicted within the past five years of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements or receiving stolen property.

Any company or entity, including officers, directors, or beneficial owners to have paid a federal or state agency a settlement claim in excess of \$1 million for allegations from improper billing, collusion, failure to disclose requisite information or bid rigging would also be prohibited.

The Department of Human Services would be required to know which companies have engaged in questionable practices, and many times they wouldn't know their status in other states, said Kent Allin, materials management division director for the Department of Administration.

[Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville) said the bill will "force state government to be doing something they ought to have been doing

in the first place” by not contracting with companies of questionable backgrounds.

A companion bill, [SF1687](#), sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Compensating for the shutdown

Current state employees who used vacation time during the July 2005 partial government shutdown would be compensated in full under a bill, approved March 21 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Leon Lillie](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), [HF333](#) would fully compensate current employees for any vacation time used during the shutdown period. Only current employees, and not those who have retired or left their positions, would be eligible, Lillie said. “There’s going to be some casualties,” but people still working should be treated fairly, he said.

There were no employees testifying in support of the bill because of a contract agreement following the shutdown that compensated employees for half of the time they used. Part of that agreement was that employees couldn’t come forward for more compensation, Lillie said.

The Department of Employee Relations opposes the bill because the contract was voluntarily signed by all the unions that represent state employees, said Paul Larson, deputy commissioner for labor relations and compensation for the department. It states that a complete and total understanding was reached, and no effort should be made to diminish or enhance terms of the agreement before any quasi-judicial, legislative or quasi-legislative body, he said. “If you look at the first two weeks of July, that’s prime vacation time they were going to be off anyway.”

“We’re often told as legislators not to meddle in the negotiations process,” and if we pass this, we make the assumption the unions did not represent their people, said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague).

“It was us, here in this body and the leaders of the state, that really caused the situation,” Lillie said, adding that the 8,300 state workers deserve to be treated fairly, and the shutdown wasn’t their fault.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF329](#), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Hire from layoff list first

State agencies would be required to exhaust their senior employee layoff lists before they could contract for professional services, under a bill approved March 20 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Under the bill ([HF548](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), agencies could not contract out jobs eliminated in the previous four years, without first considering former employees on seniority unit layoff lists. Nor could they contract for services in excess of \$5,000 without first considering laid off employees on the list.

The concern came from information technology agency employees, said Richard Kolodziejski, legislative affairs director for the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. He cited the governor’s [Web site](#), which says the state will encourage competition through pricing and outsourcing while increasing the use of technology in government services. Employees are concerned about the governor’s upcoming trade visit to India, and if that could lead to outsourcing of state jobs, he said.

An unsuccessful amendment offered by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) would have required the agency to make contract decisions based on best value.

In opposition, [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) asked how best value can be placed on people. “I mean how would you decide the best value between me and Rep. Brod?”

As the committee erupted in laughter, Rep. Brod responded, “Mr. Chair, I can answer that question if you wish.”

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF471](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Toxic herbicide

Atrazine is a herbicide commonly used by farmers to prevent weed growth. Almost 80 million pounds of the compound are sprayed on fields across the United States annually, some believe to the demise of generations to come.

“My professional opinion is that you should get rid of it,” said Tyrone Hayes, a professor in the Department of Integrative Biology of the University of California, Berkeley, who has studied the effects of atrazine on frogs and other beings.

He was speaking on behalf of [HF1986](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Cresent), which would direct the [Department](#)

[of Health](#) to establish and enforce public drinking water standards for atrazine levels at least as low nationwide levels, or 3 parts per billion.

The House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division laid it over March 21 for possible omnibus bill inclusion. The companion, [SF2056](#), is sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville) and has been referred to the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

Hayes found that frogs, both in laboratory and field testing, that were exposed to atrazine suffered hormonal imbalances in utero, changing them to hermaphrodites; immunosuppression, making them more susceptible to disease; retarded development, both cognitively and physically; and inhibited metamorphosis from tadpole to frog.

This is significant, he said, because processes and chemicals across species are pretty much identical: they all possess the testosterone and estrogen that drive reproduction, for example, and are similarly affected by the thyroid and steroids.

“(Frog) hormones are the same chemically as human beings,” he said.

He cited additional studies, some by atrazine’s manufacturer, Syngenta, which show increased prostate and breast cancer rates in people most vulnerable to the compound, either due to geography or workplace.

“It’s not about you or me — we’ve already been exposed,” he said. “It’s not about our children or our grandchildren — (they’ve) already been exposed. It’s about our future ... and what they’ll say about us.”

Timothy Pastoor, head of human safety for Syngenta, said Hayes misrepresents studies about atrazine, specifically those about heightened cancer rates in humans, and said the herbicide has undergone 12 years of intense evaluation by the [Environmental Pollution Agency](#). He contends it remains very useful for its users.

“It works, it’s cheap and it helps farmers,” he said. “It can also prevent 90 percent of erosion that may occur (in fields).”

— M. SIMPSON

Care for sexual assault victims

It took several tries for parties concerned with [HF1442](#) — dubbed the Compassionate Care for Sexual Assault Victims Act — to find a compromise over a provision requiring distribution of the emergency contraceptive known as Plan B to victims of sexual assault.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), the bill proposes a standard of care for sexual assault victims in hospitals statewide. It necessitates providing “unbiased”

information about emergency contraceptives and prophylactic antibiotics — which help prevent infection of sexually transmitted diseases — and mandates that such drugs be provided should they be safe for, and requested by, the patient.

The House Health and Human Services Committee approved the bill March 20. It now awaits action by the full House.

Proponents argued that providing safeguards at hospitals would prevent additional hardship to women who might otherwise struggle to locate Plan B before the drug's 72-hour window of efficacy closes.

"There's no crime where people must provide for their own medical care," said Beth Olson, program coordinator for the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault.

Members labored over language to assuage Catholic hospitals and pro-life advocates, who worry that emergency contraceptives might terminate a pregnancy. They ultimately agreed upon an amendment that exempts providers from supplying Plan B should a woman be found pregnant.

A Senate companion bill, [SF1266](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Executive director needed

After three deaths and several complaints about care at the 400-bed Minneapolis Veterans Home, Gov. Tim Pawlenty, in February, called for a consultant to manage day-to-day operations at the facility.

This is one of five veterans homes in the state, and the [Minnesota Veterans Homes Board](#), which oversees the operations, has been unable to fill the executive director position since it became vacant last August.

There are high praises from the board for Hastings Veterans Home Administrator Chip Cox, who is acting as interim executive director of the board. But he is unable to apply for the position because he is not a veteran. And that qualification could be a reason why the pool of acceptable applicants is so limited, said Mike Pugliese, deputy commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) sponsors [HF1891](#), which would eliminate the veteran qualification.

But opposition by one group during the House Veterans Affairs Division meeting March 16 prompted Haws to promise to find a solution before the bill moved to the next committee.

"It is hard for me to believe that you can't find a qualified person in the medical field who is a veteran," said Al Loehr, legislative

director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

All veterans' organizations in the state, except for the VFW, have leant support to the qualification change, according to Pugliese.

"Yes, these are veterans homes, but these are long-term care facilities," Pugliese said. The veteran qualification does not necessarily equate to better care. The goal is to find the best candidate, he said.

Haws said that unless a compromise could be reached on the requirement, "the bill would be dead."

The House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee approved the amended bill March 21 and sent it to the House Finance Committee.

The Senate companion, [SF2059](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), was referred to the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

As amended, the bill provides that veteran status for the executive director position would be preferred, but not required.

Qualifications for board members are also addressed. The board chair would need to be a veteran, which is not currently a requirement. It also strengthens language stating that at least five of the nine members be health care professionals.

— L. SCHUTZ

Medicinal marijuana

Minnesota could become the 12th state to legalize the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes — but it won't be easy.

At a meeting of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee March 19, [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) presented [HF655](#), which would provide regulations for marijuana use and production.

Calling it a compassionate way to support those who are suffering, [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) said the bill would provide a way for doctors to help their patients alleviate pain.

Support was also provided by witnesses suffering with liver disease, Tourette's syndrome and cerebral palsy, all calling for the legalization of a drug that has helped them when other medications could not.

Opposition came from representatives of law enforcement, county attorneys and the Minnesota Family Council. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom said the bill "is not in the interest of Minnesota's citizens." The bill is trying to do work that should be done by the Federal Drug Administration, and it would give the perception that "pot is harmless," he said.

When an amendment was proposed to provide stricter regulations and criminal penalties, law enforcement officials said that even with the changes, the bill was a "dud." It

gives the message to our youth that pot is cool, said William Gillespie, executive director of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association.

Neal Levine, director of Minnesotans for Compassionate Care, stressed that many studies have been done to support marijuana as a legitimate drug for pain management, and the bill would provide the necessary oversight for production and distribution.

Approved by the committee on a roll call vote, 11-8, the bill's next stop is the House Finance Committee.

The companion, [SF345](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

Mental health services coverage

Medical Assistance could cover more mental health care expenses, under a bill sponsored by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie).

If passed, [HF794](#) would force the system to reimburse psychologists for consultations with physicians, and increase overall reimbursement rates for mental health professionals by 23.7 percent.

The House Mental Health Division approved the bill March 16 and sent it to the House Health and Human Services Committee.

Steve Vincent, director of Behavioral Health Services at St. Cloud Hospital, said the legislation would accomplish two goals important to practitioners: "to improve access to mental health services and to integrate mental health care into the rest of health care."

He and Willie Garrett, chief professional officer for the Minnesota Psychological Association, characterized the issue as one of quality care, arguing that effective patient treatment includes attention to both body and mind.

"All medical problems have a mental health component to them," Garrett said.

Otremba said the consultations and care described in the bill already take place, many on a pro bono basis. This, she said, makes it especially difficult for rural areas to recruit mental health professionals, because of how little their income would be compared to colleagues working in metropolitan areas.

Members were surprised that similar policies weren't currently in place.

"It seems like we should have had this in place two decades ago," [Rep. Bruce Anderson](#) (R-Buffalo Township) said.

"Exactly," Otremba said. "We tried before, and we're hoping this year, we'll be successful."

Sponsored by [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), [SF855](#), the

companion bill, awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

HOUSING

Battling foreclosures

Since the burst of the housing bubble, foreclosure rates have surged across Minnesota.

From 2005 to 2006, rates climbed by 167 percent statewide, and housing advocates say they expect continued increases in coming years at two or three times today's levels.

"If we don't act quickly to provide the counseling and foreclosure assistance (these people) need, we will lose millions in public and private investments in our communities," [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) told members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 19. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

He sponsors [HF1744](#), which would provide \$2 million more in fiscal years 2008-09 to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for HECAT, the homeownership education, counseling and training program. The program offers money to nonprofit organizations and groups that, in turn, provide short-term, no-interest loans, counseling and other services to families at risk of foreclosure.

Darryl Dahlheimer, program manager for Lutheran Social Service Financial Counseling, said the boost would go a long way in protecting families from two of the most dire consequences of foreclosure: bankruptcy and homelessness.

"It's a myth that we can help everyone facing foreclosure, but it's not a myth that we can prevent them from going homeless," he said. "There are options for people that they don't know about."

For instance, he said, those who've fallen victim to predatory lending can sell their home and collect any equity, instead of leaving it to lenders, with the help of guidance counseling. Dahlheimer said HECAT funding in 2006 allowed his agency to assist nearly 1,500 families with administrative services or loans.

A companion bill, [SF1588](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

HUMANITIES

Money for history

Historical societies across the state could get grant help with preserving their pasts.

Sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City), [HF1862](#) would appropriate money from the General Fund to the Minnesota Historical Society in fiscal year 2008 for a grant-in-aid program for county and local historical societies. The bill was held over for possible omnibus bill inclusion March 19 by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division. There is no Senate companion.

Each dollar of state funds would have to be matched dollar-for-dollar with non-state funds by the grant recipients. The money would be one-time and available until June 30, 2009.

Urdahl said local and county historical societies are often strapped for funding and this grant program could go a long way.

[Rep. Bob Gunther](#) (R-Fairmont) said the funding probably isn't enough, but it's a good start. The bill had no fiscal note.

— S. HEGMAN

INSURANCE

Domestic partner benefits

Bread and butter were circulated by several Republican members of the House Health and Human Services Committee March 21 as a message about [HF1618](#), which would grant health insurance to domestic partners of eligible state employees.

The reason was symbolic, as a return to the "bread-and-butter issues" most important to Minnesotans.

"As Republicans, we were criticized for straying from the bread-and-butter issues of Minnesota," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said. "But here we are, hearing this bill."

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), the bill would entitle same-sex domestic partners to the same benefits available to spouses of state employees. It would force a return to a policy implemented through the collective bargaining process in 2002 that was later nullified by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

"That was one of the most demoralizing days of my work life, not to mention a big inconvenience for us," said Lori Lippert, a state employee for almost 12 years. "It made me feel like my work was less important than the person sitting next to me."

The bill was approved and sent to the House Finance Committee.

C. Scott Cooper, representing OutFront Minnesota, said the policy was important for three reasons: "It's fair, it's good business and it's easy to do."

Analysts expect \$1.8 million in additional costs to the state should the bill pass. The

figure would increase due to a successful oral amendment offered by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) that opened the legislation to all domestic partners, regardless of sex.

[Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul) sponsored the companion, [SF1369](#), which has been laid over for possible inclusion in the Senate Government Budget Division's omnibus bill.

— M. SIMPSON

LAW

Harsher no contact penalties

Under the Domestic Abuse Act, there are two orders a court can provide for a victim's protection.

A court may provide an order for protection, which requires the petitioner to apply for the order at a hearing before a judge. Once the order is granted, the respondent — the person the order is against — may not physically harm or contact the petitioner, or visit the petitioner's residence or place of employment.

If there are three violations within a 10-year period, the respondent is guilty of a felony with a possible five-year prison sentence.

A court may also provide a no contact order, which can be issued once charges have been filed against an abuser. This order does not require a request from the victim, and does not carry the same penalties as the order for protection.

[HF506](#) proposes to close the gap in the law.

Under the bill, a second violation of a no contact order would be a gross misdemeanor; the third would be a felony with the same sanctions as an order for protection, which would include a minimum of 30 days' incarceration and counseling.

Assistant Attorney General David Voigt said that the most volatile period in domestic abuse situations is directly after an abuser is charged and released. That's when the no contact orders can provide protection, and that's why this provision must be fixed, Voigt said.

Sponsored by [Rep. Dave Olin](#) (DFL-Thief River Falls), the bill was approved by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee March 20 and has been sent to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF890](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Duluth retiree benefits

A bill attempting to curb the impending \$300 million health care liability for retired Duluth city employees is in the hands of a conference committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF163/SF60*](#) would allow the Public Employees Retirement Association to establish an irrevocable fund for the city to help pay for post-employment benefits promised to retirees. The [State Board of Investment](#) would invest money for the fund with earnings credited to the city.

Huntley amended the bill by inserting the House language into the Senate file, which was then passed 127-5 by the House March 16. The Senate did not concur with the change, and a conference committee was appointed to work out the differences.

Under the bill, the board could also invest money from the city's community investment fund to help with debt service payments for the city's street improvement program.

In 1983, the state auditor told Duluth city officials to be more thorough in their accounting practices after learning employees were retiring with large amounts of sick leave time. Negotiations with unions resulted in free health care for retirees in exchange for giving up the sick leave.

"Unfortunately the city never set aside any money to pay for that," Huntley said. The change would reduce the liability to about \$150 million.

"I believe there could be a much more cost effective way to address the matter," said [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake).

The bill comes on the heels of a Jan. 22 report issued by the Office of the Legislative Auditor that expressed serious concerns with post-employment benefits by local jurisdictions that are not adequately funded.

— P. OSTBERG

New name for county association

Signed
by
the
governor

To better represent the nature of its organization, the Metropolitan Intercounty Association has changed its name to the Minnesota Intercounty Association, under a new law signed March 19 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Keith Carlson, executive director of the association, said that it would also reflect the fact that eight of the 13 members of the association are from Greater Minnesota.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bev Scalze](#) (DFL-

Little Canada) and [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), the law was effective upon enactment.

[HF935/SF736*](#)/CH6

— C. GREEN

MILITARY

An invitation to WWII vets

Dedication of the new [World War II Veterans Memorial](#) on the State Capitol grounds is scheduled for June 9, and [Rep. Tim Faust](#) (DFL-Mora) would like every veteran from that era to have a chance to attend.

If [HF1901](#) becomes law, it might just be possible.

Earlier in the session, as Faust viewed the construction progress of the new monument, he began to think about how he could get all the state World War II veterans to attend the event. "This is our last chance to honor them; to show our appreciation for what they have done," he told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division March 20. Members approved the bill and sent it to the House Finance Committee.

The bill would appropriate money for transportation, meals and lodging for WWII veterans who would like to attend the event.

Plans for the event are being developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the allocation of \$500,000 would help pay for activities related to the dedication.

A companion bill, [SF1789](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

TAXES

Restoring the equalizer

In an effort to provide property tax relief to all areas of the state, a plan has been proposed to restore aid money that was cut in 2003.

Sponsored by [Rep. Robin Brown](#) (DFL-Austin), [HF1518](#) would provide a \$325 million package to restore Local Government Aid, county program aid and school levy equalization in fiscal year 2009. The bill was held over March 16 by the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division for possible inclusion in its division report.

Significant cuts were made to local government and county program aid in 2003.

Designed to provide property tax relief, the bill would restore \$125 million in LGA for aid payable in 2008, bringing levels back to pre-2003 appropriations, without inflation. County program aid would also be restored with \$25 million.

The other half of the bill would provide \$175 million in school tax levy equalization. Inflationary increases for all areas addressed in the bill would begin in fiscal year 2010.

Greater Minnesota cities receive 66 percent of the state's LGA. Alexandria Mayor H. Dan Ness said without LGA, the city of Virginia would need a tax rate nearly three times higher than the his city to produce the same revenue per person. On the flip side, Alexandria would need a tax rate three times higher than Wayzata to produce an equal amount of revenue per person.

The bill is split so that 49 percent of the money would go to the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area and 51 percent to Greater Minnesota.

A companion bill, [SF1227](#), sponsored by [Rep. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), was laid over March 12 for possible inclusion in a Senate Taxes Committee omnibus bill.

— S. HEGMAN

The citizens' bill

Thomas Hanson was sitting at his kitchen table in Brooklyn Park when he thought of an idea to help out property taxpayers.

He called that idea into the Minnesota Property Tax Comment Line, and now it's included in the Citizens Omnibus Property Tax Bill.

"He literally brought his idea from the kitchen table to the committee table," said [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), who sponsors [HF2142](#). "This is a great example of grassroots legislation."

The bill was introduced March 20 to the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division and could be included in the division's report. It has no Senate companion.

Marquart, chairman of the division, opened a comment line Jan. 29, which over a two-month period generated 650 citizen comments via phone and e-mail. Out of those comments, six ideas were picked for the bill.

Hanson's provision would reestablish "this old house," exempting up to \$75,000 of value-added improvements from a home's taxable value for 10 years on houses 50 years or older. The program was in place from 1993 to 2003.

Roger Urban of Eagan contacted the property tax line because he didn't know he was eligible for the state's property tax refund, and found the language confusing in the tax code.

"I thought, 'Am I really that stupid?' or are a lot of people in the same boat?" he said.

He found that 350,000 eligible property taxpayers don't file for their refunds every year. Also, the state's property tax booklet doesn't mention the refund, he said.

Urban didn't know about it until a couple of years ago, but was told he could claim only

money from the previous year. His provision in the bill would extend the claim timeframe to three years.

The bill would also:

- increase the market value that qualifies for a reduced class rate for the homestead of a blind or disabled person from \$32,000 to \$50,000;
- establish a new classification for rural lands to differentiate them from agricultural property and seasonal recreational property, with the same class rate as agricultural non-homestead property;
- authorize counties to establish procedures to allow homeowners to pay their property taxes in eight monthly installments from May through December of each year; and
- establish a property tax deferral program for owners of seasonal-recreational property, which would defer 50 percent of the property tax amount in excess of the tax amount in the year of application for the program, payable upon transfer of the property or the death of the owner.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Cell phone penalties

People who choose to drive while talking on a cell phone could pay more than just roaming charges.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF311](#) would double the fine for moving violations if the driver is using a cell phone at the time of the infraction.

Approved March 15 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill was laid over March 22 by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

This is not a ban on cell phones, Hornstein said. Rather it sends a message to people about the dangers of driving while distracted, especially as cell phones become more elaborate.

The bill would allow exceptions for cell phone use in certain emergency situations.

“There are many distractions that occur in cars, but cell phone use is the most dangerous because it requires a person to think, answer and respond, which is much more complicated than changing a radio station or drinking a cup of coffee,” said Donny Harder, a freshman at Minneapolis Southwest High School, who brought the bill to Hornstein’s attention. “According to a 2005 State Farm Insurance survey, more than 40 percent of respondents said they had close calls or near misses with a driver who was using a cell phone.”

[Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) questioned how an officer would know if a

driver with an earbud was using their phone. “That would double your ticket because the assumption then would be that you were talking on the cell phone because you have the earbud in your ear.”

Supporters note that cell phone records can be tracked and later used to remove that portion of the violation.

A companion bill, [SF247](#), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— M. COOK

Online driver’s education

Most teenagers cannot wait until they are eligible to get their instruction permit and then a driver’s license.

But how they receive the necessary education could change.

[Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) is sponsoring [HF1062](#), which would allow the classroom portion of driver’s education to be Internet based. Behind-the-wheel training would still be done in the traditional way.

“This simply states that this is an option,” he told the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee March 20. “We have to have kids learn in ways that work for them.”

The bill, which has no fiscal impact to the state, was held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus transportation policy bill. A companion measure, [SF885](#), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), failed March 20 in the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

Under current law, parents who home school can teach the classroom portion of driver’s education, provided [certain requirements](#) are met.

Gary Tsifrin, DriversEd.com founder, said his company, which is regulated in seven states, offers on-demand interactive learning for students with busy lives, increased motivation, increased safety and fairness.

“Online courses allow for families in rural areas to have equal access to driver’s education,” he said.

Tsifrin said his company’s program offers 2-D and 3-D interactive scenarios to teach defensive driving skills, and it asks questions every so often to ensure that a student is paying attention.

Among concerns addressed by opponents were that online training does not provide for different scenarios. The bulk of our class is teaching “What if” scenarios, said James Thienes, owner of Safeway Driving School.

“Driver’s education is not just a list of rules and regulations that teens need to learn in order to pass their permit test. Driver’s education is an opportunity to teach teens good decision making skills one more time before they go

out on our roads,” he said. “The classroom offers discussions, practical demonstrations, guest speakers, local stories, interaction with other students and accountability for each and every student.”

— M. COOK

Permitting ‘PhotoCop’

In addition to putting themselves physically in danger, running a red light could cost a motor vehicle operator financially, even without an officer around.

In 250 cities across 22 states, drivers running red lights are photographed and the vehicle owner is mailed a ticket.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1058](#) would permit the same in Minnesota. Approved March 15 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill was sent to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. A companion bill, [SF1071](#), sponsored by [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

“This is aimed at increasing traffic safety, and the thing about it is we know it works at doing that,” Thissen said. “This would avoid property damage and ultimately lower insurance rates.”

Minneapolis began a Stop on Red program in the summer of 2005, but stopped it in March 2006 because of a legal challenge that the city had no authority to enact the program. That challenge now awaits action by the state Supreme Court.

With cameras at 12 intersections, the city issued almost 25,000 citations in the first eight months of operation, and saw a 31 percent decrease in crashes, said Minneapolis City Councilman Paul Ostrow.

Assistant Minneapolis Police Chief Sharon Lubinski said sensors in the road indicate when a vehicle is going through a red light. “That starts a camera that takes three still photos and almost 12 seconds of video, which has a documentation of that violation,” she said. People can access the video online when they receive a citation.

Some division members questioned the fairness of sending the vehicle owner a ticket, when that person may not have been the driver.

We’re trying to increase awareness of who a vehicle is loaned to, said Mary Ellen Heng, assistant Minneapolis city attorney.

Howard Bass, a member of the ACLU of Minnesota Board of Directors, expressed concern about individual privacy.

“This is one small step for traffic enforcement, but one giant leap towards a 1984 Orwellian society where Big Brother monitors our every movement,” he said.

— M. COOK

Route to smooth roads a bit bumpy

Omnibus transportation finance bill includes tax increases, more transit funds

By MIKE COOK

A funding package to improve state roads and transit needs is headed for the House floor; however, it could be traveling toward a dead end.

The House omnibus transportation finance bill contains a number of proposed tax increases that supporters say are needed to get the state's transportation systems closer to today's standards, while also looking to the future. It allocates almost \$4.36 billion between the [Department of Transportation](#), [Department of Public Safety](#) and Metropolitan Council. Approximately \$3.9 billion is in transportation appropriations.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF946](#) was approved March 16-22 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the House Finance Committee, the House Taxes Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. It is expected to be on the House floor March 24.

The Senate transportation plan, [SF1986](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), was approved March 22 by the Senate Taxes Committee and awaits action on the Senate floor.

Opponents said the bill is in trouble because [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) has threatened to veto any gas tax increase.

"You need more talking with the governor as we move this thing forward," said [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon).

"The governor does change his mind once in a while, and maybe there's a time period where he's waiting for public reaction, and that could happen too," Lieder said. "We definitely are not sending this bill to be veto bait, and we told him that."

Highway user taxes

The bill includes a 5-cent increase in the state gas tax in each of the next two fiscal years, and the tax on alternative motor fuels would be raised proportionately.

"Assuming a family drives 10,000 miles a year and got 20 miles per gallon, that'd be 500 gallons at 10 cents, it'd be \$50 a year for one car," Lieder told the House Finance Committee. "I presume most cars, at least the newer models, are getting better than 20 miles per gallon."

After meeting with the governor, Lieder said Pawlenty may be interested in indexing the gas tax for inflation, something done in a

number of other states.

"It could be a way to put the two concepts together," said [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls).

The state's 20-cent gas tax has not been increased since 1988, and supporters said if the tax had been adjusted for inflation since then, the current tax would be 34 cents per gallon.

"We've seen our gas prices go way up and none of those increases are being spent on our roads in Minnesota," said [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). "Wisconsin suspended their indexing after Hurricane Katrina, and they stand at 32 cents a gallon. It's an embarrassment to me that Wisconsin's roads are in better shape than ours. That's

because they made a commitment to ongoing support through indexing their gas tax."

Vehicle registration taxes would be affected because there would no longer be caps on the amount one could pay. Approved during the Ventura administration, state law now puts a \$189 cap for the vehicle's first year and a \$99 cap thereafter.

The bill also increases the vehicle depreciation schedule so there is a greater reduction per year in the base value used to calculate the tax, and it limits the tax so previously registered vehicles are not affected by the change.

Motor vehicle sales tax revenue

State voters passed a constitutional



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Proceeds from a proposed 0.5 percent transportation sales and use tax could be used for construction or reconstruction of roads or trunk highways of regional significance. The House is expected to vote on the bill March 24.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The omnibus transportation finance bill calls for 60 percent of motor vehicle sales tax revenues to ultimately go to highways, 36.5 percent to Twin Cities metropolitan area transit and 3.5 percent to Greater Minnesota transit.

amendment in November 2006 to dedicate all motor vehicle sales tax revenues to transportation improvements.

Under the bill, the revenue would be allocated so that once it is fully phased in on July 1, 2011, 60 percent of funds would go to highways, 36.5 percent to Twin Cities metropolitan area transit and 3.5 percent to Greater Minnesota transit.

[Rep. Connie Ruth](#) (R-Owatonna), one of three “no” votes in the House Transportation Finance Division, along with [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) and [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton), said there was much talk about a 35-5 transit percentage split. “We really are in trouble. Five percent really needs to be the minimum for the rural area,” she said. “In the rural area, we know that the population is aging and as we’re trying to get people even to get groceries or get to the doctor, the rural transit is really important. We don’t have the opportunities in the rural area that we do in the city.”

The lack of funding hurts disabled Minnesotans even more because this is their way to get around, said [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley), who expressed fear that they could end up seeking financial assistance because they can’t get to a job.

“I think 36.5-3.5 is certainly better than most of our rural colleagues may have expected at the start of session,” said [Rep.](#)

[Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls). “It’s certainly a compromise for most of us in the metro with the amount of transit needs we have.”

Local option taxes

Counties would be permitted, under the bill, to raise their wheelage tax from \$5 to \$20 on each motor vehicle, except for motorcycles and trucks with a gross weight of at least 26,000 pounds, kept in the county and subject to annual registration.

Under current law, counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area can impose the tax. The

bill provides for all counties and it eliminates the requirement of an offset in property taxes.

Five counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area — Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington — would be permitted to impose a 0.5 percent

transportation sales and use tax as well as a \$20 excise tax on motor vehicles sold at retail. Carver and Scott counties would

also be permitted to join the quintet.

Proceeds from the tax would be allocated by a joint powers board to the state and political subdivisions for construction or reconstruction of roads or trunk highways of regional significance and transitway construction, capital improvements and operating assistance.

“We didn’t have much choice,” Lieder said.

“It’s an embarrassment to me that Wisconsin’s roads are in better shape than ours.”

— Rep. Melissa Hortman

“To have us go to the taxpayers and the folks in Minnesota looking at a billion-dollar increase is pretty staggering when we’re seeing the economy, I think, a little bit on shaky ground.”

— Rep. Doug Magnus

Other aspects

The bill would also provide:

- \$518.6 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$738.6 million in fiscal year 2009 for trunk highway construction work;
- more than \$245 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$277.8 million in fiscal year 2009 for infrastructure operations and maintenance;
- \$146.9 million in the biennium to the Metropolitan Council, with bus transit receiving all but \$10.6 million, which is allocated for operation of the Hiawatha light rail line;
- \$296.8 million for the Public Safety Department, of which \$139.1 million would be for the state patrol, including an additional \$8.4 million for 40 additional troopers and other enhancements;
- a fee increase on most license plates and stickers, and a fee would be established for collector plates and an International Fuel Tax Agreement sticker;
- a 75-cent increase for driver’s licenses, permits and identification cards. Fees for filing a certificate of title would increase by the same amount, as would various permit fees for motorized bicycles; and
- a license reinstatement fee of \$20 for a person whose license was suspended for gasoline theft.

“The problem we have is that the entire bill isn’t so much the highway portion, it was the transit portion, because transit doesn’t have a dedicated fund.”

Counties in Greater Minnesota, acting alone or with a joint powers agreement, would also be permitted to impose the 0.5 percent transportation sales and use tax and \$20 excise tax. However, unlike the Twin

Transportation continued on page 23

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HF2165-Ruud (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Automatic renewal clauses limited in business leases or contracts.

HF2166-Benson (DFL) **Finance**

Minnesota Historical Society grant provided for professional development for teachers.

HF2167-Davnie (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Minnesota Financial Crimes Oversight Council and Task Force reorganized, oversight of the council transferred to the attorney general, jurisdiction expanded to include organized retail crime and driver's license surcharge imposed.

HF2168-Kahn (DFL) **Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Hemp industry development and regulation provided, possession and cultivation of industrial hemp defense provided and definition of marijuana modified.

HF2169-Peterson, A. (DFL) **Finance**

Sparsity revenue calculation modified and levy reestablished for school districts in statutory operating debt.

HF2170-Kahn (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system individual retirement account plan and supplemental plan unclaimed account procedures established.

HF2171-Mullery (DFL) **Taxes**

Tax increment financing; plan election provided for first year to receive increment.

HF2172-Brod (R) **E-12 Education**

Charter school students authorized to participate in extracurricular activities in their resident school district.

HF2173-Eastlund (R) **Finance**

Independent School District No. 15, St. Francis, compensatory pilot grants increased for two years.

HF2174-Kalin (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission memorialized by resolution to take account of energy efficiency.

HF2175-Kalin (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Public building report card required reporting energy use in public buildings on a publicly accessible database.

HF2176-Kalin (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Tax increment financing and JOBZ and business subsidies searchable database required.

HF2177-Bunn (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Health Risk Advisory Council established.

HF2178-Thissen (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Long-term care programs funding restored, services expanded, new grant programs established, statewide priority created to enhance the mobility of older adults, studies required and tax credit established.

HF2179-Berns (R) **Health & Human Services**

United States Medical Licensing Examination extensions authorized for applicants with medical illnesses.

HF2180-Anderson, B. (R) **Health & Human Services**

Board of Oversight of Human Services Appeals established.

HF2181-Abeler (R) **Health & Human Services**

Care coordination for children with high-cost mental health conditions provided through the U Special Kids Program.

HF2182-Loeffler (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Human services advisory committee established to simplify program administration and studies and reports required.

HF2183-Thao (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

High deductible health plan regulation provided.

HF2184-Liebling (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Medical education and research cost distribution formula modified.

HF2185-Lanning (R) **E-12 Education**

Healthy child development within communities grant program established.

HF2186-Hornstein (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Child support six-month review requirements modified, and income information and enforcement remedies provided.

HF2187-Erickson (R) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Volunteer firefighter relief association investment policies and reporting required, and certain reporting requirements repealed.

HF2188-Brynaert (DFL) **Finance**

Driver's license road examination required upon every third renewal.

HF2189-Paymar (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Statewide moratorium established on new billboards, and existing billboards declared nonconforming uses.

HF2190-Atkins (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Biodiesel fuel sales regulated.

HF2191-Madore (DFL) **Transportation Finance Division**

Secretary of state address designated address use authorized for data protection purposes.

HF2192-Hilstrom (DFL) **Taxes**

Brooklyn Center tax increment financing district authorized uses expanded.

HF2193-Hilstrom (DFL) **Taxes**

Brooklyn Center tax increment financing district authorized uses expanded.

HF2194-Kahn (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teacher retirement fund associations in cities of the first class provisions modified, state and local public retirement program actuarial services procurement modified.

HF2195-Demmer (R) **Finance**

Rochester; Trunk Highway 52 and 65th Street N.W. interchange construction permits issued.

HF2196-Sailer (DFL) **Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Waste pesticide collection program provisions modified, and minimum annual program expenditure amount increased.

HF2197-Zellers (R) **Transportation Finance Division**

Interstate 94 designated as the Purple Heart Trail.

HF2198-Dill (DFL) **Taxes**

Cook County Hospital District levy authority modified.

HF2199-Hansen (DFL) **Finance**

South St. Paul span arch bridge funding provided.

HF2200-Magnus (R) **Finance**

Hydrogen use as energy resource promoted to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

HF2201-Olin (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Lifetime deer hunting licenses granted to residents who have been a volunteer firearms safety instructor for at least 25 years.

HF2202-Paymar (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Billboards nonconforming use provisions modified.

HF2203-Paymar (DFL) **Finance**

Outdoor advertising permits surcharge imposed, funding provided for removal of dilapidated billboards.

HF2204-Rukavina (DFL) **Finance**

Board of Invention funding provided.

HF2205-Bigham (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sexual offenses; applicability provided for certain old sex offender provisions for crimes committed before enactment of new sex offender law.

HF2206-Kalin (DFL) **Finance**

Impound lot operators recovery costs provided and abandoned vehicle account established.

HF2207-Westrom (R) **Transportation Finance Division**

Recreational vehicle combination definition modified to include any type of towed middle vehicle.

HF2208-Slocum (DFL)**Taxes**

Richfield City Hall and maintenance facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2209-Madore (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Motor vehicle sale damage disclosure requirement modified.

HF2210-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Restorative justice services grants provided.

HF2211-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Badger indoor ice arena funding provided.

HF2212-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

State Capitol restoration and renovation funding provided.

HF2213-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Tow permit for oversized and overweight vehicles required.

HF2214-Juhnke (DFL)**Taxes**

Agricultural homestead property minimum acreage requirements decreased in certain cases.

HF2215-Knuth (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota travel green program required through Explore Minnesota Tourism.

HF2216-Scalze (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Watercraft surcharge and water recreation account modified, and nonresident fishing surcharge imposed.

HF2217-Dominguez (DFL)**Finance**

Alternative dispute resolution study and assessment provided.

HF2218-Slocum (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Utility proceedings interveners compensation conditions and procedures specified.

HF2219-Koenen (DFL)**Finance**

Gasoline and special fuel tax rates increased, and phase-in of motor vehicle sales tax revenues to transportation provided.

HF2220-Anderson, B. (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Nonconforming lots use local government requirements limited.

HF2221-Peterson, S. (DFL)**Finance**

Board of Teaching funding increased.

HF2222-Otremba (DFL)**Finance**

Central Lakes Regional Sanitary District sewer system funding provided.

HF2223-Abeler (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Home rule charter cities authorized to provide by charter the procedures for appointment of housing and redevelopment authority commissioners.

HF2224-Walker (DFL)**Finance**

African-American juvenile crime prevention grants provided.

HF2225-Demmer (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Artificial light use in locating animals restrictions modified.

HF2226-Lanning (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Postsecondary institutions authorized to conduct raffles under certain circumstances.

HF2227-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Agricultural, veterans and military affairs funding provided, programs established, and accounts and fees modified.

HF2228-Anzelc (DFL)**Taxes**

Agricultural sales tax exemption extended to logging tires.

HF2229-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

DWI offenders ignition interlock device pilot project established, and temporary exception to mandatory sentencing law provided for offenders required to use these devices.

HF2230-Loeffler (DFL)**Taxes**

Future residential relative homesteads eliminated and non-homestead residential property class rate modified.

HF2231-Brown (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government aid to towns provided.

HF2232-Smith (R)**Taxes**

Open space property tax law requirements modified.

HF2233-Kalin (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Local government development credit banks transfer authorized.

HF2234-Otremba (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Dallas Sams Memorial Highway designated for Trunk Highway 210.

HF2235-Juhnke (DFL)**Taxes**

Farm and small business properties estate tax exclusion provided.

HF2236-Liebling (DFL)**Finance**

Southeastern Minnesota Regional Public Safety Training Center funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF2237-Nelson (DFL)**Taxes**

Bloomington tax increment financing district improvements construction materials sales tax exemption provided, and district duration extended and boundaries modified.

HF2238-Brynaert (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

School employee statewide health insurance program established.

HF2239-Thissen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Minneapolis Board of Estimate and Taxation duties and powers transferred to the Minneapolis City Council.

HF2240-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Laurentian Energy Authority renewable biomass energy production funding provided.

HF2241-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Health and Human Services grants and programs and Housing Finance Agency funding provided.

HF2242-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Seasonal restaurant property tax class rate reduced.

HF2243-Tschumper (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Lanesboro local sales tax authorized.

HF2244-Morgan (DFL)**Taxes**

Burnsville surface water treatment plant construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2246-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Renewable energy production incentive allocations modified, home biomass use rebates established and other renewable energy requirements provided.

HF2247-Dean (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Attorney general private attorney contracts procedures and restrictions established.

HF2248-Nelson (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Workers' Compensation Advisory Council recommendations adopted.

HF2249-Clark (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

City property transfers to nonprofit organizations for housing projects regulated.

HF2250-Bly (DFL)**Finance**

Dakota language teacher training immersion program established at the University of Minnesota.

HF2251-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Bloomington north-south airport runway siting reimbursement mechanism provided.

HF2252-Davnie (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Sustainable growth working group established.

HF2253-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

Community-based energy development projects provisions modified, renewable energy projects regulated, Public Utilities Commission policies required, wind energy permits authorized and renewable energy option program sunset repealed.

HF2254-Ruth (R)**Health & Human Services**

Waseca County nursing facility payment rates modified for services to ventilator-dependent persons.

HF2255-Zellers (R)**Taxes**

Seasonal-recreational property value frozen for two years relating to property taxation.

HF2256-Eken (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Fish house and dark house three-year license provided.

Tuesday, March 20
HF2245-Greiling (DFL)**Ways & Means**

General education aid modified.

HF2257-Beard (R)**Taxes**

Local construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and airports construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2258-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Arsenic health risk level standard required.

HF2259-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Nonresident compensation taxation modified.

HF2260-Lenczewski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State Budget Trends Study Commission established.

HF2261-Hansen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Mendota local food and beverage tax authorized.

HF2262-Ruud (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Department of Energy established and duties transferred from Department of Commerce.

HF2263-Tillberry (DFL)**Finance**

Education transition revenue modified.

HF2264-Svigum (R)**Finance**

Trunk highway projects funding provided.

HF2265-Mullery (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Violent offenders required to consent to on-demand searches as a condition of being released on probation, supervised release or parole.

HF2266-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Port of Duluth export grain inspection provided.

HF2267-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Finance**

Arrowhead Regional Corrections Agency productive day pilot project funding provided.

HF2268-Lenczewski (DFL)**Taxes**

Public improvements and services financing and issuance of obligations terms and conditions provided.

Wednesday, March 21**HF2269-Ruud (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Hospital reporting of charity care, bad debt and community benefit required.

HF2270-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Farm co-op health plan pilot project authorized.

HF2271-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health care services provisions, data management and Medicaid reimbursement provisions modified; lead risk assessment services provided; and general assistance medical care, Medical Assistance and long-term care partnerships modified.

HF2272-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare eligibility increased for single adults and households without children.

HF2273-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Dependent health care coverage definition expanded to any unmarried child under age 25.

HF2274-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare children's eligibility insurance barriers removed.

HF2275-Norton (DFL)**Finance**

Dental providers critical access reimbursement modified, and additional staff required to administer critical access dental program.

HF2276-Demmer (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Silver Star Families of America Day designated on May 1.

HF2277-Pelowski (DFL)**Finance**

Winona State University Memorial Hall improvements funding provided.

HF2278-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Propane pre-purchase program established and consumer protections provided to delivered-fuel customers.

HF2279-Doty (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota Correctional Facility - St. Cloud current and past retirement coverage clarified.

HF2280-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Nuclear-powered electric generating plant certificate of need prohibition removed, Legislative Electric Energy Task Force sunset extended and study required.

HF2281-McNamara (R)**Finance**

Non-resident tuition rebate provided.

HF2282-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Mantorville; Stage Coach Trail and welcome center design grant provided.

HF2283-Demmer (R)**E-12 Education**

Nonpublic school student health services provided.

HF2284-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Mantorville; Stage Coach Trail and welcome center design grant provided.

HF2285-Sertich (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resource and cultural heritage dedicated funding provided through increased sales tax revenue, funds established, Natural Heritage Enhancement Council created and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2286-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Taconite proceeds distribution to school districts modified.

HF2287-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Municipal airport authorities and property tax levies authorized.

HF2288-Brynaert (DFL)**Finance**

Mankato Civic Center Arena and Women's Hockey Development Center funding provided.

HF2289-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Patient Safety and Drug Review Transparency Act adopted requiring disclosure of clinical trials for prescription drugs.

HF2290-Sailer (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Worker's compensation; improper access to medical records penalties provided.

HF2291-Greiling (DFL)**Finance**

Telecommunications/Internet access equity aid full funding provided.

Thursday, March 22**HF2292-Morrow (DFL)****Finance**

State natural disaster assistance grant program established.

HF2293-Ozment (R)**Finance**

Claims against the state settlement provided relating to corrections.

HF2294-Dill (DFL)**Taxes**

Cook-Orr Hospital District levy authority modified.

HF2295-Madore (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Board of Medical Practice required to bring adverse actions to district court, governor authorized to remove a board member and board member duties specified.

HF2296-Peppin (R)**Finance**

Interstate 94 noise barrier funding provided to mitigate the effects of 2006 Rogers tornado.

HF2297-Kohls (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Metropolitan agricultural preserve expiration authorized under certain conditions.

HF2298-Zellers (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Jury service postponement procedures specified, small businesses protected, grounds for excuse established; and maximum length of service, contempt of court for failure to appear and supplemental compensation for lengthy trials provided.

HF2299-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Lake Zumbro restoration funding provided.

HF2300-Kahn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

University of Minnesota event on-sale liquor licenses authorized.

HF2301-Fritz (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Correctional employees early retirement incentive provided.

HF2302-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Great River Ridge Trail funding provided.

HF2303-Sertich (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Side Lake in St. Louis County water level established.

HF2304-Masin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
 Child support payment agreements full compliance requirement provided.

HF2305-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
 Energy activities funding provided, mortgage companies and licensees provisions modified, credit services organizations registration fee increased, residential mortgage fraud prohibited and penalties imposed.

HF2306-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
 Public Utilities Commission required to initiate proceedings regarding interconnection of distributed generation facilities.

HF2307-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
 Global Warming Preparedness Act of 2007 adopted; rulemaking and

reporting relating to statewide greenhouse gas emissions required; and carbon dioxide pipeline rights-of-way and phase-out of coal-fired power plants provided.

HF2308-Marquart (DFL)
Finance
 Independent School District No. 801, Browns Valley, declining pupil aid funding provided.

HF2309-Atkins (DFL)
E-12 Education
 Career and technical student organizations benefits in the postsecondary institution classroom study provided.

HF2310-Davnie (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
 Social Security unemployment offset provisions modified.

HF2311-Davnie (DFL)
Taxes
 Tobacco tax and tobacco health impact fee computation modified for "moist snuff."

HF2312-Ward (DFL)
Health & Human Services
 Long-term care insurance policies protected from extreme premium increases.

HF2313-Bunn (DFL)
Ways & Means
 General fund forecasts additional revenues priorities modified.

HF2314-Erickson (R)
Finance
 Special education funding task force established.

HF2315-Anzelc (DFL)
Finance
 Isolated schools declining enrollment revenue funding increased.

HF2316-Koenen (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
 Renewable energy agency authorized with the powers of a municipal power agency, and claims handling status specified.

HF2317-Loeffler (DFL)
Finance
 Hennepin County new chance program for young parents funding provided.

HF2318-Bigham (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
 Repeat sex offender sentences modified.

Transportation continued from page 19

Cities metropolitan area, the tax enactment would only be permitted if approved by a majority of voters, and the tax must be for a specific transportation project with a termination upon project completion.

If all counties enacted the sales tax increase, it is estimated to net \$680 million in the upcoming biennium and \$764 million in fiscal years 2010-11.

"I would assume we aren't going to see too many rural counties jumping into the sales tax the first year or anytime," Lieder said.

"There are over \$800 million in taxes and fees increasing in this bill, so far," Magnus said. "To have us go to the taxpayers and the folks in Minnesota looking at a billion-dollar increase is pretty staggering when we're seeing the economy, I think, a little bit on shaky ground."

Leased vehicle taxes

The greatest disappointment expressed by members of the House Transportation Finance Division was with a plan to reallocate the sales

tax from leased vehicles for transportation purposes. The money was to be divided the same way as the motor vehicle sales tax revenue, with 60 percent to highways and 40 percent to transit. That money now goes to the General Fund.

"When transportation comes up against public safety, education and health care it just never seems to win the fight, no matter who's mounting the fight," Holberg said.

[Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) predicts that without additional funding Metro Transit may shut down some routes and lay off staff.

Pawlenty supports the plan, but Lieder said the House Taxes Committee has kept the money for its use.

"So we will not receive any of the leased vehicle sales tax revenue for transportation purposes," Holberg said. "The targets of the DFL Caucus will not provide for that transfer to transportation, but that money will continue to be spent for General Fund purposes."


"It's basically in the tax committee," Lieder said. "We're going to try through the process, I hope somewhere we can get additional money.

This money was really kind of critical to our transportation division because it would provide some additional monies for transit, which we don't have."

"From an outstate viewpoint, she's not just speaking for the minority party," said [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton). "That's not a viewpoint that's simply outstate Minnesota. I'm not happy either," Hortman added.

Bonding

The bill calls for \$1 billion in transportation bonding for construction on the trunk highway system. The total would be bonded at \$100 million per year for the next 10 fiscal years. Pawlenty is seeking \$1.7 billion.

"In his bill this year, he was using the highway revenue from the motor vehicle excise tax, which, if you used it all, would equate to the billion-seven," Lieder said. "We had to use some of that money because of our targets. We put in a billion and used the rest of it within the general bill." 

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Baby goes goo-goo ga-ga

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Number of Minnesota births in 2005..... | 70,920 |
| Last year the number was that high | 1964 |
| Births in 2000 | 67,451 |
| Fertility rate, or average number of lifetime births per woman in 2005 | 2.02 |
| In 2000 | 1.97 |
| In 1980 | 1.87 |
| Average number of births per day in Minnesota in 2005 | 194 |
| Number of those that were firstborn children..... | 76 |
| Births to women age 35 and older | 30 |
| Births to women under age 20..... | 13 |
| Percent of Minnesota babies born in 2005 that were to unwed mothers | 30 |
| Percent in 2000..... | 26 |
| National average in 2005, as percent..... | 36 |
| Percent of babies born in Minnesota to mothers who were born outside the United States..... | 17.4 |
| Percent in 2000..... | 13.4 |
| Percent in 1990..... | 5.4 |
| Births in 2005, as percent, where the mother and father were not of the same race or ethnicity | 8.9 |
| Percent in 2000..... | 7 |
| Percent in 1992..... | 4.2 |
| Increase in plural births in the state from 2000 to 2005, as percent | 6 |
| Increase from 1995 to 2000, as percent | 29 |
| Percent of plural births in 2005 that were twins | 95 |
| Abortions performed in Minnesota in 2005..... | 13,362 |
| Top three boys names for babies born in Minnesota in 2005 (Ethan, Jacob and Samuel)..... | 490, 474, 435 |
| Girls named Ava, Grace and Emma..... | 457, 423, 417 |
| Top three boys names for babies born in Minnesota in 1995 (Jacob, Tyler and Matthew)..... | 747, 703, 672 |
| Girls named Samantha, Emily and Ashley | 561, 552, 438 |
| Top three boys names for babies born in Minnesota in 1975 (Jason, Michael and Matthew)..... | 1,241, 1,182, 914 |
| Girls named Jennifer, Amy and Angela | 1,322, 893, 645 |

Sources: Minnesota State Demographic Center, [Department of Health](#), including [2005 Minnesota Health Statistics Annual Summary](#) and [Induced Abortions in Minnesota January-December 2005: Report to the Legislature](#); [Social Security Administration](#).

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SESSION WEEKLY

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HF2319- HF2398

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: House and Senate employees enjoy a few moments outdoors March 26 as the temperature reached 81 degrees, a record high for the date.

—Photo by: Sarah Stacke



Breaking the barrier of silence

Systemic shift needed to deal with issues concerning mentally ill

PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

By Mia Simpson

Envision this: It's late one night, and you hear a loud gasp from your bedroom. You enter the room to see your spouse lying on the floor, clutching his left arm and struggling to breathe. He thinks he's having a heart attack. You decide to drive him to the hospital and, upon arrival, you explain what's occurred. Intake says you'll have to wait — they have no beds available. You sit down, and for hours you wait, knowing your partner is suffering and there's nothing you can do.

While hard to imagine this unfolding in a medical emergency, in mental health care, adequate treatment is rarely guaranteed. The reasons vary: in the above case, if the person were instead suicidal, he or she may wait hours or days in a hospital waiting room because of shortages in inpatient psychiatric beds.

The problems

But there is no one scapegoat. A topographical view of the mental health system shows a landscape of scarcity, silos and struggle: providers aren't being reimbursed enough, issues aren't caught soon enough, services aren't connected well enough and people aren't supported holistically enough.

"We coordinate a system that fosters

fragmentation," said Ron Brand, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs Inc. "It's hard to have the housing, medication, therapy, rehabilitation services, school supports for kids all working off the same treatment plan and goals in a way that is coherent and reinforces another."

"Devastating" best describes what can result from a substandard system of care: families break up; children languish in school; some descent into homelessness, addiction, poverty and crime; and many will prematurely die.

"I think the most telling statistic is that people with mental illness live 25 years less than the general population," said Wes Kooistra, assistant commissioner of the

Chemical and Mental Health Services at the Department of Human Services. "This means the system is failing them."

A pathway to success

Kooistra and others are advocating a shift from an approach that treats mental illness as a social service issue to one that focuses on people's health needs first.

"Mental health treatment needs to be provided early, at the onset of symptoms, and with the same rigor and urgency as other health care diseases," Kooistra said.

Mental health advocates state one more mission: creating a pathway to success.

"We need to break down some of the barriers of isolation and loneliness. It's about bringing forward the things that make us happy in life," said Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato). "It's been about managing behavior. That's a low level of expectation, and we can do better."

Both can feel like difficult quests in a system described as "broken," "fragmented" and "under-resourced" by experts, and one where those in need refuse or are denied treatment, sometimes for months or years, because of stigma or service holes.

First Reading continued on page 4

A solution

But change brews nonetheless.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) sponsors HF196, a bill she describes as “a multi-session blueprint.” It’s catchall legislation that seeks to affect everybody touched by mental health issues, including providers, patients, caregivers, schools and corrections.

“HF196 recognizes that there is no silver bullet to shore up the mental health system or ensure access to all,” Greiling said. “It recognizes that we must interject money and quality into various systems and at different stages.”

Initially parceled out as 18 separate proposals, the bill was first heard in the House Mental Health Division Feb. 9, and was instead kept whole as it coursed through policy committees and finance divisions for health and human services, public safety and civil justice, education and economic competitiveness, K-12, and housing and public health. It awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, SF148, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Close behind is the governor’s mental health proposal, HF1067, sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), a bill that overlaps Greiling’s in aspects relating to health care access and reimbursement increases, but is more limited in scope. It awaits action by the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division. Its companion, SF148, sponsored by Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The bills

Constructed by the Mental Health Legislative Network, a coalition of more than 20 organizations, HF196 has four major articles: criminal justice, children’s mental health, funding and miscellaneous, which includes provisions on employment, culturally competent services, police and housing.

The criminal justice system often sees the worst cases of untreated mental illness: those who become violent or homeless.

Greiling’s bill attempts to stop the revolving door by offering support for those who have been incarcerated. It would mandate mental health screening to offenders during intake to county jails.

The bill also seeks to create a council to expand crisis intervention training for police, who say they encounter and are prone to mismanaging confrontations with severely mentally ill people; protocol for timely release from solitary confinement; standards and expansion of mental health courts; and provide state health care to inmates upon release.

Furthermore, the bill outlines employment supports and incentives for providers who help mentally ill people find good, stable jobs and would allocate more funding to the Bridges Program, which provides rental subsidies for persons with serious and persistent mental illness.

“To me, there’s no such thing as recovery unless you have a home and a job,” Greiling said. And, she said, earlier management of a mental illness may mean fewer and less severe falls into homelessness, hospitals, crime, and ultimately, criminal justice.

Early screening

Problems sometimes start in youth, and Greiling proposes multiple child-based supports. They include mental health training for foster parents, because a majority of out-of-home placements occur due to behavioral problems, and increased funding for trauma-focused services; Children’s Therapeutic Services and Supports, which provide an array of mental health services; children’s mental health collaboratives; programming for at-risk children; respite care for families; and mental health screening for students, probably the most controversial piece of the legislation.

The screening program is modeled after the Columbia University TeenScreen Program, a tool that schools may administer to teen students, with parental and student consent,

that identifies the most prevalent mental health issues of that age: anxiety, depression and suicide.

EdWatch policy analyst and board member Karen Effrem contested the tool’s efficacy and cited national cases where children were falsely identified and treated for mental illness,

resulting in intense hardship and even death.

“I also want you to understand that consent is a big issue,” she told members of the House Health

“We need to break down some of the barriers of isolation and loneliness. It’s about bringing forward the things that make us happy in life.”

— Rep. Kathy Brynaert

Care and Human Services Finance Division March 27.

The dozens of other provisions in the bill look further at gaps in funding, service and health coverage, holes that HF1067 also tries to fill.


Under both bills, community mental health providers and intensive services would be slated for large rate increases, and coverage in state health care programs would be expanded to include more mental health treatments. This would help providers recoup some of the services they currently lose money on, such as family education, diagnostic assessments and care coordination and consultation. The bills also protect mental health services and benefits from future rate reductions.

Greiling’s bill proposes items for the underserved — ethnic populations, rural populations and the dually diagnosed — such as a loan forgiveness program for culturally specified providers and grants for culturally specific organizations. The bill would also fund technologies for rural providers and agencies, which often must travel great distances, and would provide more mileage reimbursement.

For people dually diagnosed as mentally ill and chemically dependent, the bill proposes a demonstration project that focuses on housing, outreach and care.

It would mandate health care for college students, who are most at-risk for mental health issues, and studies on bed capacity and employment success.

The bill would provide funding for three programs: suicide prevention, which lost state funding in 2005; crisis services; and a tracking system for mental health outcomes.

According to the preliminary fiscal note analysis, total costs to the state would be \$134 million by fiscal year 2011, with brunt of funding taken from the Department of Human Services. 

The facts

- One in four adults has a mental illness.
- Of the adults with a serious mental illness using case management, 75 percent were reported to be looking for work or not in the labor force.
- Suicide is a leading cause of violent death in Minnesota, causing four times as many deaths as homicides.
- The number one reason for out-of-home placement by counties is behavioral problems.
- Seventy percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a serious mental illness.
- Thirty percent of children in the child welfare system have a serious mental illness.
- Twenty five percent of MFIP caregivers have a serious mental illness.
- Sixteen percent of adults in the corrections system have mental illness.
- People with mental illness, on average, live 25 years less than the general population.

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held March 22-29 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

BONDING

Bonding bill approved the first time

A conference committee is needed to reach compromise on a pair of capital investment bills.

After nearly two hours of discussion and four failed amendments, the House passed [HF886](#), sponsored by [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul), March 27 with an 84-45 vote. However, the Senate amended the language of its proposal, [SF2157](#), sponsored by [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), into the bill one day later and sent it back to the House for concurrence, which did not occur.

This year, the first year of the biennium, is dedicated to the state's budget. Bonding for projects this year is limited to emergencies, and some members think the \$255 million House bill is too large for the off year. The Senate bill totals \$306.6 million.

"It's not our job to be Santa Claus for the State of Minnesota," [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) said about providing \$30 million to the Red Lake School District. "They don't have a tax base, but they have casinos."

"The State of Minnesota has to educate every student in this state," said [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), who represents the Red Lake Indian Reservation. "I would keep that in mind regardless of the number of students enrolled today or tomorrow."

Of the total House package, \$135 million is bonded money and \$120 million is one-time money from the state's General Fund. An additional \$33.4 million will be provided from the state's trunk highway fund.

Some other appropriations include:

- \$52 million for higher education asset preservation and replacement between the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities;
- \$30 million for a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, which would, in part, be used by the mens and womens hockey programs at [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#);

- \$30 million for the final design and construction of the Central Corridor transitway between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul;
- \$12.7 million from the trunk highway fund for the exterior repair of the Department of Transportation Building in St. Paul;
- \$10 million for grants to noncommercial television stations from the General Fund to assist with the continued conversion to a digital broadcast signal as mandated by the federal government. It must also be used to interconnect Minnesota public television stations;
- \$8 million for the RIM Conservation Reserve to acquire conservation easements from landowners on marginal lands to protect soil and water quality and to support fish and wildlife habitat. Of this, \$2.25 million is to implement the program;
- \$2.5 million to the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board to construct siphons, a conveyance system and other improvements to accommodate water level and outflow control of the water level in the Canisteo mine pit in Itasca County;
- \$2.09 million for flood mitigation grants for the city of Roseau for the state share of land acquisition, engineering and design costs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Project, which will protect the city from recurring flooding. This would also go for flood mitigation projects in Browns Valley; and
- \$2 million for the state's share of a high-speed rail line between St. Paul and Chicago.

— S. HEGMAN

BUDGET

Deficiency funding

Taking care of 2007 unexpected budget expenditures and unintended shortages is the intent of the deficiency funding bill. Sponsored by [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) and [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF958/SF846*](#) is scheduled to be heard on the House floor April 2. It was passed 61-2 by the Senate March 26.

The \$10.37 million in one-time appropriations is a supplemental budget request from the governor addressing deficiencies faced by some state agencies this biennium.

More than \$7.8 million is targeted for the Metropolitan Council to fill a budgetary gap created because less than expected revenue is being generated from the motor vehicle

No Session Weekly April 6

In observance of Passover and Easter, there will be no House floor sessions or committee hearings after 2 p.m. Monday, April 2 through Monday, April 9.

Because of this, there will be no Session Weekly published Friday, April 6. Session Weekly staff will resume coverage of the House with committees and a floor session scheduled for April 10. The magazine will then resume its regular Friday publication date.

sales tax from which the organization draws funding.

The bill provides \$150,000 to the [Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board](#) to cover court-ordered payment of attorney's fees resulting from a First Amendment challenge regarding political activities relating to organizations.

While much of the case — Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life vs. Kelly — was struck down in U.S. District Court, a portion of campaign law was ruled unconstitutional, and the state was required to pay attorney's fees relating to that finding, according to Jeanne Olson, executive director of the board.

Other appropriations addressed in the bill include:

- \$1.1 million to match FEMA funds received for natural disaster assistance payments;
- \$522,000 for Greater Minnesota transit assistance;
- \$240,000 to replace funding lost to an inadvertent repeal of a state statute;
- \$200,000 to the [Board on Judicial Standards](#) for special hearing costs;
- \$200,000 to the [Board of Public Defense](#) for transcript costs;
- \$66,000 to the ombudsman for mental health and developmental disabilities; and
- \$47,000 for tax court deficiencies.

— L. SCHUTZ

CRIME

Support for victims of violence

According to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, violent crime in the United States has slowly begun to rise.

Throughout Minnesota, local government and law enforcement agencies are looking for ways to address their public safety concerns, including crime reduction and support for victims.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St.

Louis Park), [HF1033](#) would help provide some of that support. Approved 126-1 by the House March 24, the bill awaits action by the full Senate where [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) is the Senate sponsor.

The bill would require an employer to allow a violent crime victim to take a reasonable amount of time off from work to attend criminal proceedings related to the case. This bill would also provide the same protection for the spouse or next of kin. Any employer that violates this provision would be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a civil suit.

All victims of crime need the support of family and friends, even more so during criminal proceedings, said Jennifer Nodes, executive director of the Minnesota General Crime Victim Coalition.

Dorian Eder, representing the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, said that although this type of legislation will not affect a lot of people, it is important. For some, this may not be a crisis; but if it happens to them, it's a big deal, she said.

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Class size ratios

Class sizes could become smaller and capped in an effort to reduce the achievement gap.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1317](#) would have the education commissioner establish class size ratios or use ratios established in the bill.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 22. It now goes to the House K-12 Finance Division.

Under the ratios proposed in the bill, grades K through three classrooms would have no more than 20 students per teacher, no more than 22 students per grades four through six classroom teacher, no more than 25 students per grades seven through nine classroom teacher, and no more than 28 students per grades 10 through 12 classroom teacher. Laboratory classes for students in grades seven through 12 would have no more than 24 students per teacher.

Judy Fedo, a teacher in the Anoka-Hennepin Independent School District, said that classrooms designed for 25 students now hold 35, and teachers can't help students without having to jump over desks and students.

[Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls) is concerned that this bill would take one more local control issue away from local school boards.

Hornstein said the intent of the bill is to be a guideline for a study, and not to dictate class sizes.

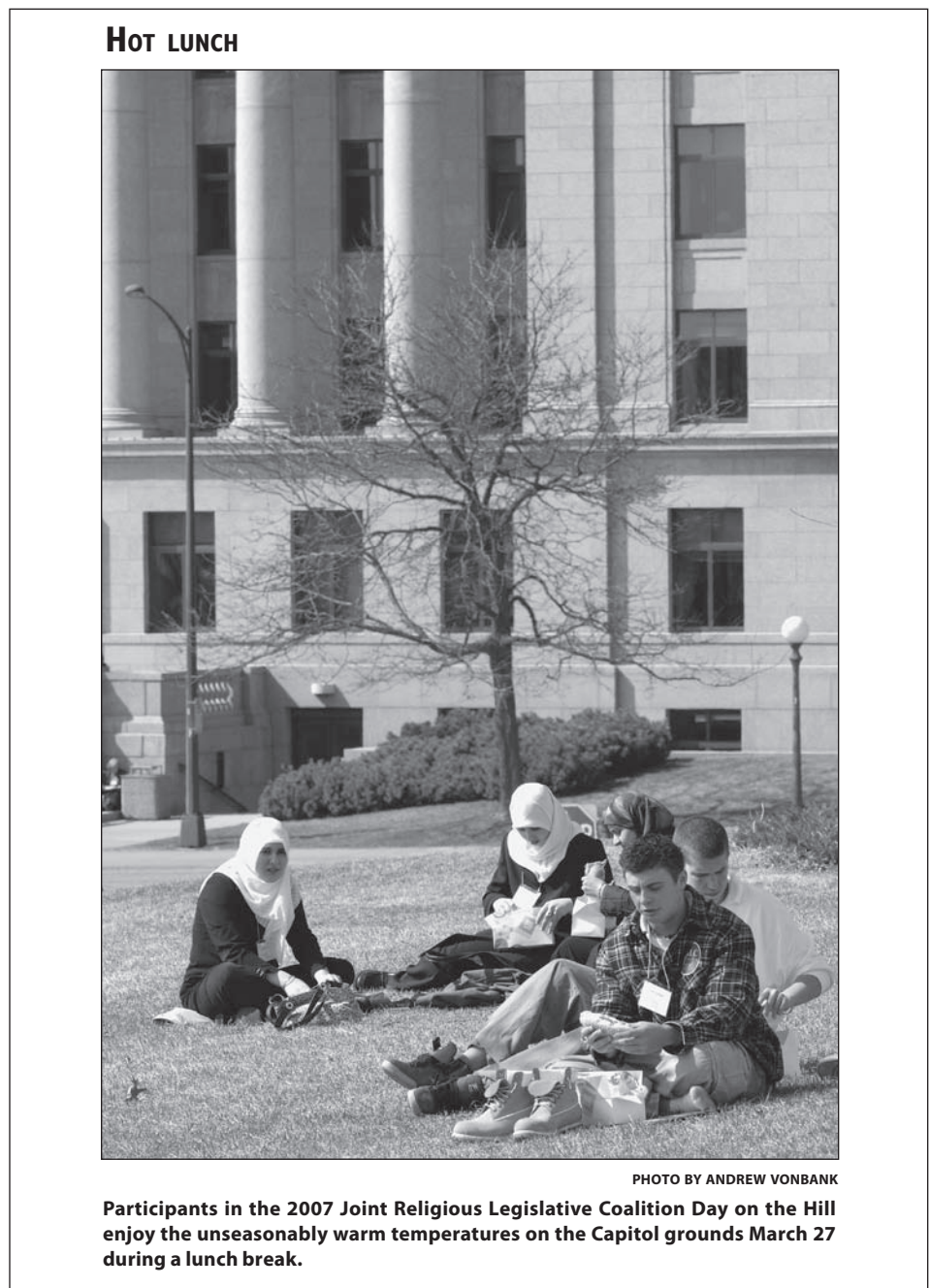


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Participants in the 2007 Joint Religious Legislative Coalition Day on the Hill enjoy the unseasonably warm temperatures on the Capitol grounds March 27 during a lunch break.

A report would be due to the Legislature on Jan. 15 each year. It would include class-size ratios in each school district, and describe the gap between actual size and target size. The commissioner would also estimate the cost necessary to fund the schools to reduce the gap, and give recommendations for achieving class-size ratios.

A companion bill, [SF1247](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HARDING

Fragrance free schools

Minneapolis schools could go fragrance free in an effort to curb asthma attacks by students and teachers.

Sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-

Mpls), [HF2148](#) would create a working group to include students, teachers, a school administrator and one member of the Board of Education to recommend a campaign to inform students and parents about the potentially harmful effects of fragrance products. Also, the health commissioner would develop a fragrance free schools education pilot program.

On March 23, the House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, which held it over March 28 for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Hattie Bonds, assistant principal at Patrick Henry High School, said she has seen increased cases of asthma among students. "You can't

learn if you can't breathe, and you can't live if you can't breathe," she said.

"The American Lung Association said that fragrances do trigger asthma attacks," she said.

Cassandra Morgan, a junior at Columbia Heights High School, researched the chemicals found in perfumes and shaving gel and said that some contain carcinogens. "Some of the side effects I found were irritated eyes and nose, and upper respiratory problems."

According to a written statement from the Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association there is no scientific evidence linking fragrances and scented products to any adverse health effects.

A companion bill, [SF1956](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing, and Family Security Committee.

— S. HARDING

Congress needs to pay up

Two resolutions urging Congress to come up with the money for two underfunded federal mandates forced upon the states are working their way through the House and Senate.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) and [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), [HF89/SF13](#)* would memorialize the president and Congress to carry through on their pledge to fund 40 percent of special education costs. The resolution, passed 61-0 in the Senate Feb. 26, was approved March 23 by the House E-12 Education Committee and sent to the House floor.

In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which provides framework for providing free, public education to all students regardless the level of their disability.

Congress is supposed to fund 40 percent of special education costs, yet Minnesota has never received more than 18 percent of its costs, according to the resolution.

Also receiving committee approval was [HF258](#), sponsored by Greiling, that would memorialize Congress to offer greater flexibility to the states, and fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act as part of its reauthorization. It has been sent to the floor. A companion, [SF28](#), sponsored by Wiger, awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

According to the Office of the Legislative Auditor, NCLB will cause 80 percent to 100 percent of Minnesota elementary schools to fail the adequate yearly progress requirements by 2014. The resolution asks Congress to give the states greater flexibility to investigate schools not making adequate progress and what needs to be improved.

The resolution also states NCLB may be constitutionally illegal, because education is not a power delegated to the federal government.

— S. HARDING

Wind power

Besides teaching students, schools could be generating energy.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) would allow schools to increase the amount of wind energy conversions they can produce.

[HF1642](#) would increase the limit on what school boards can "construct, acquire, own in whole or in part, operate, and sell and retain and spend the payment received from selling wind energy from a wind energy conversion system." The current level is 3.3 megawatts; the bill would move it to 10 megawatts.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved the bill March 22 and sent it the House floor.

Ted Suss, superintendent of Wabasso Public School, suggested the increase so that every time there is an upgrade, a school board doesn't have to ask the Legislature for a bump in capacity.

Fourteen Minnesota school districts applied for \$3 million in clean renewable energy bonds from the federal government, and formed a joint powers entity earlier this month to collectively produce 46.2 megawatts of capacity. The plan is to build one wind farm, which would save money for individual schools.

"Building a wind tower behind the school or any single site, even if you're up in the two to three megawatt range, doesn't make a whole lot of sense," Suss said.

A companion bill, [SF1635](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), was laid over March 22 by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology, and Communications Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HARDING

EMPLOYMENT

No mandatory nurse overtime

Nurses employed at most state facilities could have the same ability to say no to extra work as those in the private sector.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF966*/SF817](#) was approved 121-10 by the House March 27. It was amended and passed 53-12 by the Senate the same day. The House refused to concur with the changes March 29 and a conference committee has been requested to work out the differences.

A 2002 law allows a nurse to refuse



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Hundreds of nurses gather at the Capitol on March 27 in support of Citizens Action for Nurse and Patient Safety. "Nurses Day on the Hill" brought together many care providers to promote nurse staffing and patient safety as legislators discuss funding priorities.

mandatory overtime without consequences from their employer if they feel tired or sick and believe it is in the best interest of the nurse and patients not to have that person in a caregiver role during those hours. Prior to the law, nurses felt they were being forced into too many overtime hours because of intimidation.

According to Howes, the Minnesota Hospital Association has had no problems since the law was enacted; however, the [Department of Corrections](#) said it doesn't need to honor the law.

The bill adds to the law nurses employed by the state if the nurse is involved in resident or patient care, regardless of the type of facility where the nurse is employed or the facility's license.

Because of the large fiscal impact if it were included, the department would be exempt from the bill. "Maybe we'll deal with that next year," Howes said.

The bill does not supersede a valid collective bargaining agreement.

Admitting it could be a good policy, [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), one of the no votes, expressed concern that it was not negotiated at the bargaining table, like most other employment terms.

— M. COOK

Earning a check with assistance

Minnesotans want to be paid for a day's work.

Sponsored by [Rep. A. "Willie" Dominguez](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF924](#) would prohibit an employment contract that requires an individual to perform unpaid work in return for cash assistance from the [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#), unless the individual agrees in writing to perform the work.

Approved by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division March 22, the bill awaits action on the House floor. A companion bill, [SF514](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

Administered by the [Department of Human Services](#), the program provides cash assistance and employment and training services to eligible families with children.

Parents receiving benefits who are able to work must do so. If a job pays too little to support a family, wages can be combined with reduced assistance.

A 2005 federal law changed the definition of work activity, which allows for unpaid work to be performed in return for welfare, if private sector employment is unavailable.

Linden Gawboy, a member of the Welfare Rights Committee, said that workfare could hurt all working people.

"It would serve to drive down wages and displace workers. Workfare is a direct attack on working people as a whole, on organized labor and on organizing efforts," she said.

In a written statement, Phyllis Walker, president of AFSCME Local 3800, said people should not be penalized because of their situation.

"Welfare recipients want to work, they want to have health insurance, they want to earn vacation and sick leave and they deserve to be paid a living wage. Unfortunately, in our economy there are not enough living wage jobs to go around and that is why they are forced to support their families with welfare."

— M. Cook

ENERGY

E-filing for utilities

The [Public Utilities Commission](#) allows utility companies to file documents electronically, but until recently, existing language in statute was still geared toward the old

paper-only system. A new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 27, corrects the problem.

Signed
by
the
governor

Speaking on the House floor, [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the House sponsor, said the law will amend language in state law governing the PUC's administrative practices. He called it a "technical bill," and said it was brought forth by the PUC. [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris) is the Senate sponsor.

"It's basically just a faster, easier and more efficient way of bringing us into the 21st century for Internet use of filings," Johnson said.

[Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) expressed concern that the law does not sufficiently address privacy concerns. Johnson replied that the issue of privacy had not been raised by the PUC or the Department of Commerce.

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1678/SF1294](#)*/CH10

— N. Busse

Solar power for the needy?

Minnesotans eligible for low-income weatherization assistance from the state could soon have a new option to help save with their energy costs: solar power.

Sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), [HF2137](#) would allow the [Department of Commerce](#) to provide grants to install solar heating equipment in households eligible for the state's weatherization assistance program. The House Energy Finance and Policy Division held an informational hearing on the bill March 23 and included it in the omnibus energy finance bill, passed March 28 by the division.

Sailer said Minnesota has a "persistent problem" of low-income residents not being able to afford winter heating. The bill would allow renewable energy to be added to the list of options the state has to provide energy assistance, she said.

Jason Edens, representing the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance, said that while energy assistance is needed for low-income families, merely providing them with subsidies is not a long-term solution.

"Families who are outfitted with renewable heating systems on their homes no longer need to rely upon energy assistance. A properly sized and installed solar heating system can eliminate the need for a family's energy assistance budget by offsetting their winter space-heating needs substantially," he said.

Sailer said that funding for the grants would be provided by existing revenues from a petroleum product inspection fee currently used to fund an oil-burner retrofit assistance program that has been "underutilized."

There is no Senate companion.

— N. Busse

ENVIRONMENT

Finance bill approved

Parks and trails, invasive species programs, the Clean Water Legacy Act and numerous other programs and agencies would see a funding increase under the provisions of this year's omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill.

[HF1651](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls), would appropriate more than \$346 million over the next two fiscal years. The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division approved the bill March 29 and sent it to the House Finance Committee.

In addition to providing base appropriations for the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency and others, the bill would ramp up funding for a number of new and current initiatives, including:

- \$47.1 million in new funding to various agencies for restoring impaired waters under the provisions of the Clean Water Legacy Act;
- \$3.2 million in new funds for combating and controlling invasive species;
- \$1.5 million in additional funds for metropolitan regional parks and another \$1.5 million for state trails maintenance and operations;
- \$750,000 for monitoring endocrine disruptors in surface waters; and
- \$150,000 to help control tree pests.

Among the bill's more controversial provisions is a section that would ban the development of new 4x4 truck trails on state-owned lands in Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties. [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) successfully amended the provision onto the bill. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) called it "ludicrous."

Another controversial section of the bill would tighten the state's requirements for replacing wetlands. Hackbarth moved to eliminate the section from the bill, but that motion was defeated on a vote of 9-8.

The bill would also add a \$1 surcharge onto deer hunting licenses to fund a program that would allow hunters to donate deer meat to food assistance programs for the needy.

A companion bill, [SF1781](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. Busse

MPCA bill in limbo

A bill that would modify the governing structure of the [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) was approved by a House committee, but appears unlikely to progress any further this year.

[HF294](#), sponsored by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), would modify the MPCA Citizens' Board, which sets the direction and policy of the agency. Currently, the board is made up of eight members and the commissioner, who serves as its chair. The bill would remove the commissioner from the board, add another citizen member, and grant more power to the board.

The bill was approved March 22 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. It now goes to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee — but that committee is not currently scheduled to meet again this session.

Mullery said that when the MPCA was created in 1967, the commissioner was subordinate to the board. He said the roles were later reversed, and his bill seeks to restore the board and the commissioner to their original respective roles.

Grant Merritt, a former MPCA executive director (in the past, the equivalent of a commissioner), said the commissioner used to serve essentially as an administrator for the board, but was given greatly expanded powers in 1996.

"There still is a board, but they hardly have any functions, and they really are not policy-making decision makers anymore," Merritt said, adding that the old system was more efficient and more transparent.

The bill was originally to be re-referred to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division and rolled into its omnibus bill, but that motion was changed after several Republicans on the committee objected to what they saw as bypassing the normal committee process.

A companion bill, [SF1876](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Cleaning up dish soap

The dishwasher detergent under your sink may clean your dishes, but it also contains approximately 8 percent phosphorus — a nutrient that will eventually work its way through your local wastewater system and help pollute Minnesota's surface waters.

A bill (HF1382), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), would address the problem by banning the sale of household dish detergents containing more than 0.5 percent phosphorus by July 1, 2010. Approved March 22 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, the bill is headed to the House floor.

Phosphorus pollution in surface waters

leads to an excessive production of algae, causing normally clear bodies of water to become cloudy. A 2004 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency [report](#) states that residential automatic dishwasher detergents account for approximately 1.9 percent of all such pollution in the state.

Thissen called the bill a "fairly substantial step forward" in dealing with the issue, and noted that it was brought forward by the dishwasher detergent manufacturers themselves.

Dennis Griesing, vice president of government affairs for the Soap and Detergent Association, said the detergent industry is pursuing similar legislation in several other states. He said that the 0.5 percent figure represents the traditional "trace element" standard, and further explained that the 2010 effective date is necessary because the industry has not yet found suitable alternatives to phosphorus and needs time to innovate.

The bill would only affect residential dishwasher detergents, not commercial detergents. Griesing said that because the health standards and dishwashing machinery are different in a commercial environment, alternatives to phosphorus cannot be used.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) expressed concern that chemicals containing endocrine disruptors — contaminants that cause male fish to take on female sexual characteristics — might be substituted in place of the phosphorus. Griesing replied that his industry is "very aware of the debate around endocrine disruptors," and promised to repeat Wagenius's concerns to his association.

A companion bill, [SF1109](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), was held over March 28 by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— N. BUSSE

Hazard awareness

Minnesota has not done a good job of consistently tracking environmental toxins and their connection to human disease, according to the Trust for America's Health, a national advocacy group.

The organization gave the state an "F" in 2000, later raising the grade to a "C" after it applied for a grant with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

[HF1621](#), sponsored by [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) would appropriate approximately \$2 million to address the problem. The bill calls for a program for environmental health tracking and a pilot program for bio-monitoring, to test tissues and fluids for toxins. It would also create an advisory panel to oversee the efforts.

The bill was approved by the House Housing

Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 23 and sent to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division.

Bunn said the goal would be to develop a system that would provide information about the relationship between environmental hazards and disease, and to develop strategies to prevent those diseases.

The issue is personal to Bunn, whose district has been affected by chemicals linked to 3M. The company is currently involved in a civil suit brought by affected residents in Washington County.

Environmental contaminants have been linked to cancer, asthma, adverse reproductive outcomes, nervous system diseases and childhood developmental and behavioral problems, said Samuel Yamin, public health scientist for the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "Chronic diseases impose a huge cost to society in terms of health and economics," he said.

A companion bill, [SF1074](#), sponsored by [Rep. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport) was included in the Senate omnibus environment, natural resources and energy bill. Passed 61-2 by the Senate on March 27, the bill awaits action in the House Finance Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

FAMILY

Background check provisions

Signed
by
the
governor

Placing children in a new home is a delicate matter.

If there is any concern that the person taking the children in has a record, local authorities or a social services official must

do a background check. This check would involve a submission of fingerprints to the [Bureau of Criminal Apprehension](#) that will in turn obtain a criminal history from the National Criminal Records Repository.

Under a new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 27, in emergency situations, a social services agency or county attorney may request a name-based check from the national database.

The law, sponsored by [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), does place conditions on this inquiry.

Within 15 calendar days of the name-based check, fingerprints of the individual must be forwarded to the BCA for submission to the FBI. If the individual refuses to provide fingerprints, the child or children must be removed from the home.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1008*/SF985/CH8](#)

— C. GREEN

State government finance omnibus

The House State Government Finance Division's omnibus bill, sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), would appropriate \$574.7 million from the General Fund compared to the governor's recommendation of \$646.4 million.

Much of the funding proposed in [HF953](#) would support the initial staffing and general costs associated with state agencies. The bill assumes \$104 million in revenue gains from technology carryforward funds, the governor's and House tax compliance initiatives and audit fees.

The division approved the bill March 29 and forwarded it to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, [SF1997](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), was approved 42-20 March 24 by the Senate.

Policy changes in the House bill would include election initiatives, such as automatic voter registration when applying for a driver's license, allowing for lease agreements to be used as forms of identification for Election Day registration, providing voter registration and active status information on the [Office of the Secretary of State](#) Web site, and allowing for ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter.

New commissions would be created including the Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. According to the bill, the heritage office would "assist state government to foster an understanding and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity in Minnesota."

The House and Senate would be required to adopt rules requiring committees of the same jurisdictions to meet at coordinating times. Both bodies would receive an appropriation of one-time technology money that is not included in the governor's recommendation. Also, all legislative bills would be printed on 8.5x11 paper, and parking in front of the Capitol would be reserved for the public. Currently, the area is reserved for Senate members and some staff during session.

Under the House plan, the governor would be required to reduce the number of state commissioners to save more than \$8 million over the next two biennia. The governor would also be "encouraged to submit a state of the state address" by January of each odd-numbered year and announce any major policy initiatives.

Astronomers and sky lovers will be pleased to see a provision that would set state standards for outdoor lighting fixtures to help decrease light pollution in the night sky. The

standards would include a requirement that "full consideration has been given to energy conservation and savings, reducing glare, minimizing light pollution, and preserving the natural night environment."

— P. OSTBERG

Open meeting law changes

Meetings by some public bodies could be conducted legally by telephone or electronic means during declared emergencies, under a bill approved March 22 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview), [HF1303](#) would allow for these meetings without violating the state's open meeting law, if certain conditions are met, including:

- the presiding officer, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer for the governing body determines the in-person meeting is not practical because of a health pandemic or declared emergency;
- all participating members, wherever their physical location, can hear one another and all discussion and testimony;
- people present at the regular meeting location can hear all discussion, testimony and all votes;
- at least one member of the body is physically present at the meeting location, unless it's unfeasible due to a pandemic or emergency; and
- all votes are conducted by roll call, so each vote can be identified and recorded.

Gary Carlson, director of intergovernmental relations for the League of Minnesota Cities, said many cities, counties and school districts have been in the process of preparing for a pandemic flu outbreak and there is no clear authorization to conduct a meeting electronically.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF1165](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), awaits action on the Senate floor.

— P. OSTBERG

Pay equity in all contracts

Companies with more than 40 full-time employees entering into state contracts in excess of \$100,000 would be required to comply with pay equity laws, under a bill heard March 27 by the House State Government Finance Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1440](#) would require the commissioner of human rights to approve businesses plans to establish equitable compensation for employees. Upon approval, a two-year certificate of compliance would be issued. The

\$75 certificate would be required of businesses applying for state contracts issued on or after July 1, 2007, in excess of \$100,000.

The bill is included in the committee's omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF1061](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Under the bill, until July 1, 2008, businesses not in compliance but "making a good faith effort" may be issued a certificate upon submitting to the commissioner of employee relations the following:

- a statement of the business' intention to prepare a pay equity report by July 1, 2008, and information on the business' current status;
- a statement on the existence of a company-wide job evaluation system; and
- the number of male and female employees; and expressed interest in receiving training on how to establish equitable compensation relationships.

Bonnie Watkins, representing the Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota, said the bill would "ensure that there is not a pattern for lower pay for jobs performed by women." The proposed change would accompany other requirements on businesses that contract with the state, such as affirmative action plans and other pay equity laws, she said.

Representing the Minnesota Employment Law Council, Robert Reinhart said the bill wouldn't allow businesses to adjust wage rates for employment positions according to the market supply and demand. Current laws already address corporate discrimination, he said.

State government should set the example of pay equity, but should not place those requirements on the private sector as an unfunded mandate, said [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon).

The bill only requires businesses to do an evaluation of pay equity and make advances towards equity, said [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley).

— P. OSTBERG

Sustainable growth working group

A new group could promote collaboration on the state and local levels toward long-term environmental and economic development initiatives.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF2252](#) is included in the House State Government Finance Division omnibus bill. It would establish a Sustainable Growth Working Group to identify strategies for implementing policies relating to transportation, natural resource preservation, economic development and sustainability at state and local levels. A

report would be due to the Legislature on Feb. 1, 2008.

According to the bill, “The working group must identify sustainable development principles that will guide decision making in Minnesota.”

The group would consist of four legislators, nine commissioners from various state agencies and up to 12 members of the public.

They would study how “communities across the state can coordinate state resources to look at more efficiently planning and thinking about the state’s role in the global economy,” Davnie told the division March 27.

Warren Hanson, president of the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, said the group would take a comprehensive look at the state’s public investments for economic prosperity and sustainability goals, and then compare them to other states.

A companion bill, [SF2033](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), awaits action in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Covering all children

Providing health care to all children is a value that [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) believes most Minnesotans possess.

His bill, [HF1](#), would narrowly miss the mark, covering 53,000 of the 70,000 uninsured children in Minnesota by 2011.

The House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division laid the proposal over for possible omnibus bill inclusion March 27. It has no Senate companion.

Known as the Children’s Health Security Act, it acts in two phases: seeking to cover all children below 225 percent of federal poverty guidelines by October 2008, and increasing eligibility to children under 300 percent of the guidelines by January 2011. This is a change from the bill’s original language, which sought coverage for children at 300 percent by the 2008 deadline.

“This is much less expensive,” he said.

Still included are provisions that remove current barriers to coverage, such as long forms, and the appointment of a task force to study the issue.

[Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) said while he shares Thissen’s goal, he worries about the bill’s effect on small health care providers, who didn’t get the rate increase in the bill that he thinks they need.

“They can’t work at these prices,” he said. “This is not a small matter.”

— M. SIMPSON

WOMEN’S HISTORY



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Dressed as suffragists, Sarah French, left, and Mary Brown paraded at the Woman Suffrage Memorial Garden on the grounds of the Capitol March 24 to commemorate Women’s History Month. In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was approved that gave women the right to vote in elections.

New licensing standards

A hodgepodge of new licensing standards for a variety of health providers is headed to the House floor.

Sponsored by [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF57/SF26*](#) addresses X-ray operators, speech-language pathologists and audiologists, social workers and physical therapist assistants.

The bill was approved March 22 by the House Health and Human Services Committee. It was approved 63-0 by the Senate Feb. 19.

It would force incoming X-ray operators to take a nationally-certified test starting in 2008, as was in a bill offered by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie); it would make accreditation requirements more flexible for graduates of foreign medical schools, an initiative of [Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester); and it would extend expiration dates for the Board of Medical Practice’s advisory board, an effort of [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls).

The bill also includes a proposal from [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls) to open complaint options to family members and caregivers of patients for all health-related boards, and one from [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) that would change licensing and other requirements for physical therapist assistants.

Legislation sponsored by [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) took up the largest portion of the

omnibus bill. It includes tougher education standards for speech-language pathologists and audiologists, and major changes to codes for social workers and professional clinical counselors in areas such as licensure, graduate requirements, training, continuing education and supervisory hours.

“The social workers and the [Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy](#) had done work as a result of a task force last year,” Abeler said. “And this was the sum of that work.”

— M. SIMPSON

Learning about lice treatment

Lindane is an insecticide that has been used to treat lice and scabies for more than five decades. But according to [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), sponsor of [HF917](#), small insects aren’t the only ones threatened by the treatment.

“On small children, the dose is of great concern,” she said. “The EPA (which withdrew registration of the chemical for agricultural use in 2006) called it the most toxic, persistent, bio-cumulative pesticide ever registered.”

Clark’s bill would have the commissioner of health create a stakeholder committee, to include at least one environmental health scientist and at least one parent advocate, to review scientific literature on the health effects of Lindane on children, and to report findings to the Legislature by January 2008.

She said the proposal specifically targets its use for lice.

"There are millions of families who use this treatment every day," she said, adding that 52 countries have banned use of Lindane.

Robert Tennesen, a lobbyist for Morton Grove Pharmaceuticals Inc., called Clark's research "junk science," and said medications with the chemical offer an important alternative for tough cases of lice and scabies.

"It's been approved for use since 1951," he said. "The Food and Drug Administration, the EPA, the Centers for Disease Control, the American Pediatric Association — all these groups have studied this issue, and they prescribe the results."

Heard by the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 28, the bill was laid over for possible omnibus inclusion. Its companion, [SF765](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls) awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— M. SIMPSON

Smoking ban proposal still lit

A motion to move Minnesota's statewide smoking ban proposal, [HF305](#), to the House floor didn't stick March 26.

The House Finance Committee, instead, chose to approve and send the bill to the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division, after adding language proposed by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) for employees who lose their job because of the ban.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), the bill would prohibit smoking in all public places beginning in January 2009.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) characterized the issue as one of public health, quoting a Surgeon General's report: "Secondhand smoke causes disease and premature death for children and adults who do not smoke."

Opinions were split across party lines, nonetheless, particularly on the issue of private rights.

"Applying your logic, it's OK for somebody who isn't a resident to vote in this country, but an 80-year-old veteran who fought in World War II, a 70-year-old veteran who fought in Korea and a 60-year-old veteran who fought in Vietnam can't make their own decision to smoke in their VFW club," Rukavina said.

[Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) attempted to amend the bill twice, the second time seeking to give local governments the option of exempting bars that have met certain conditions, such as installed ventilation systems and enclosed smoking

areas. The amendment failed, but then was adopted after being reoffered by [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker), who imposed tighter language on conditions.

The companion bill, [SF238](#), sponsored by [Sen. Katheen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), was passed 41-24 by the Senate March 27.

— M. SIMPSON

Helping jailed addicts

A bill to ensure more timely chemical use assessments for people in jail was approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee March 22, and sent to the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division.

[Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) said he sponsored [HF499](#) for people like his son, who admitted himself into a year-long treatment program for methamphetamine addiction. The legislation would require that counties assess those jailed in their facilities if a drug abuse assessment, or Rule 25, is not provided by counties of residence within three weeks

of incarceration.

Counties of residence — where the inmates lived before the arrest — are currently mandated to complete assessments regardless of where sentencing takes place, but Joel Alter, program manager for the Office of the Legislative Auditor, said counties are struggling to keep up.

"We're hearing about cases where weeks and months go by, and no assessment," he said. "We're looking for a more structured, effective approach."

The bill also seeks to expand duties of the human services commissioner related to chemical health, to include:

- closer monitoring of Rule 25 compliance;
- distribution of best practice information to assessors and local agencies;
- more materials on abuse interventions; and
- projects, such as a directory of licensed treatment programs, for online utilization.

The commissioner is also asked to develop a plan by January 2008 to improve community-based treatment programs and to make recommendations on behalf of the consolidated chemical treatment fund, which pays for treatment of low-income individuals.

A companion bill, [SF532](#), sponsored by [Sen. Julie Rosen](#) (R-Fairmont), could be considered for omnibus bill inclusion by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.

— M. SIMPSON

DOULA OPTION



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rhonda Speers-White of Minneapolis, a certified doula, testifies before the House Health and Human Services Committee March 23 in support of a bill that would require doula services health insurance coverage and doula presence upon request added to the patient bill of rights.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Immigrant tuition

Emmanuel Rojas moved to America with his family at age 3. Now a high school sophomore, he is thinking about studying criminal justice in college.

Without citizenship, he and other immigrants must pay out-of-state tuition at most colleges and universities in the state, which can add thousands of dollars to the price tag. That could prohibit some students from attending a postsecondary institution.

"It's not like every year I can come up with \$20,000 or \$30,000 for college," he said. Undocumented immigrants are ineligible for financial aid.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF722](#) would help students like Rojas chase their dreams. Heard March 22 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, most of the bill is included in the omnibus higher education and work force development finance bill.

As amended into the omnibus bill, students would be eligible for in-state tuition at all public higher education institutions in Minnesota, if they meet three criteria: at least three years of attendance at a Minnesota high school, graduation from a state high school or attainment of a GED in the state, and registration or enrollment at a public higher education institution. In the original bill, but not the omnibus bill, is a provision whereby a student without lawful immigration status would need to have filed an affidavit indicating they have filed an application to legalize their citizenship or will at the earliest opportunity they are eligible to do so.

"This is a way to legally allow our education of students to go forward, just as we do with K-12 students," Mariani said. States are required to provide a K-12 education to all students.

Not everyone was supportive.

"The bill is an illegal alien tuition scheme," said Minneapolis resident Dell Erickson. "This bill shamelessly places the interests of illegal aliens above American families and lawful residents who have paid taxes and played by the rules."

A companion bill, [SF653](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), was included in the Senate omnibus higher education bill ([SF1989](#)) that was approved 64-2 March 22 and awaits action by the House Finance Committee.

— M. Cook

Omnibus bill gets division OK

A plan has been offered to help students with rising education costs, assist the state in its quest to be a biotechnology leader and address the health care worker shortage.

The omnibus higher education and work force development finance bill was approved by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division March 28. It is scheduled to be heard by the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division March 30.

"The days of double-digit tuition increases are over," said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman and sponsor of [HF797](#). He said tuition has increased more than 70 percent in the past five years.

The \$3.36 billion bill calls for a \$396 million increase in higher education investment, including \$36.5 million in technology improvements. It calls for a 2 percent cap on tuition increases each year at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and requests the University of Minnesota decrease its potential tuition hikes. It also calls for a potential textbook rental program and other cost saving measures.

Because of the increased funding for the



PHOTO BY TOM OLSMSCHIED

Goldy, the mascot at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, was on hand for a March 28 rally in the Rotunda as part of "Support the U Day" at the Capitol.

systems, [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) offered an amendment to freeze tuition for the next two years. It was defeated on a party-line vote.

Further, the bill includes a \$60 million increase in financial aid, although only \$12 million is in new money. The remainder comes from altering some formulas to the student's benefit.

A plan that would give in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students living in Minnesota, was not in the initial bill, but was successfully amended onto it by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls). The provision is in the Senate omnibus bill, [SF1989](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul). Approved 64-2 March 22 that bill awaits action by the House Finance Committee.

While saying the entire package is "a good bill with a lot of good things in it," [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls) warned that the entire proposal could be vetoed by [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) because it contains the so-called "Dream Act."

In order to keep the state on track to be a bioscience leader, the House bill includes \$45 million in initiatives.

"It keeps Minnesota on track to maintain our leadership in cutting edge technology," said [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul). "This is a bill that makes tomorrow's jobs possible in Minnesota."

The bill even tries to help the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame by adding a 25-cent surcharge to every

ticket for an NCAA Division I men's hockey event in the state. Revenue would be used to assist the hall, provided it remains in Eveleth.

— M. Cook

Saving money on textbooks

College students that face rising tuition costs and decreased financial aid are sometimes getting sticker shock when purchasing necessary textbooks.

Some potential assistance is included in the omnibus higher education and work force development finance bill.

"This bill is an effective attempt to show what the changes are to a textbook and create a textbook rental project," [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the sponsor of [HF1508](#), told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division March 22.

It would require that publishers disclose to the students and faculty on a Web site, in a publication or in writing, upon request, the changes made to a textbook, so it can be known if new editions are warranted. It would also direct the [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#) system to create one or more textbook rental pilot programs to be implemented in the 2008-09 year.

According to the Minnesota State College Student Association, average college textbook prices increased 186 percent between December 1986 and December 2004; whereas, inflation increased 72 percent.

Bruce Hildebrand, the Association of American Publishers' executive director for higher education, said the association supports transparency, but the bill is asking for things that cannot be met. He also said that the problem oftentimes is with professors.

For example, he said 216 introduction to psychology books are on the market, ranging from \$23.50 to \$120.50 at retail, which doesn't include electronic, hybrid or custom books. "All told, a faculty member might see 5,000 options for this one course. The disconnect is the students only see what the faculty has chosen, and their choice becomes new, used or don't buy the book," said Hildebrand, adding that the requirements could force small publishers to no longer do business in Minnesota, thereby driving up costs.

Hildebrand noted that a recent report by the Used Textbook Association showed that during a four-year period only 4.5 percent of the 178,000 books they sold were issued in new editions.

A companion bill, [SF1314](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chuck Wiger](#) (DFL-North St. Paul), was included in the Senate omnibus higher education bill ([SF1989](#)), passed 64-2 March 22 awaits action by the House Finance Committee.

— M. Cook

HUMANITIES

Past preservation, forward thinking

[Explore Minnesota Tourism](#) could still see additional advertising money from the state, but it won't come from the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission's budget.

So decided the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division, which approved its omnibus bill March 26. Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF1660](#) now moves to the House Finance Committee.

The amendment, proposed by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), to take \$250,000 from the commission and give it to Explore Minnesota Tourism to promote the state's seasonal recreation was withdrawn, but discussion could still ensue later.

"I just want to make sure we have an adequate tourism budget," Sailer said.

For the 2008-09 biennium, Explore Minnesota Tourism could see \$24.25 million from the state, and the commission could see \$747,000. Of that, \$67,000 per year would be a one-time appropriation for an additional event development position, plus expenses, said Paul Erickson, the commission's executive director.

The \$125.6 million bill would also give \$1.1 million to the Indian Affairs Council, of which \$80,000 would be used in the first year of the biennium for the purchase of an Indian burial site in Becker County. Also, \$100,000 in the first year would be used for a grant for the Dakota/Ojibwe Language Revitalization Project to expand the program for American Indian children who do not live on an Indian reservation.

Other biennium appropriations include:

- \$53.47 million for the Minnesota Historical Society for education and outreach, preservation and access, and pass-through appropriations for various groups in the state;
- \$14.5 million for the Minnesota Zoological Board, of which \$275,000 is a one-time appropriation;
- \$6.2 million for public broadcasting, which will be used for grants for various equipment needs; and
- \$1 million for the Minnesota Humanities Commission, of which 10 percent in each year is for lifelong learning programs in Greater Minnesota communities that do not receive financial support from other large educational institutions.

A companion bill, [SF1619](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

INSURANCE

Minimum limits changed

Signed
by
the
governor

General liability insurance minimums for licensed building contractors will be changed because of a new law signed March 27 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), the law requires licensed manufactured home installers and roofers to have general liability insurance policy minimums of at least:

- \$100,000 per occurrence, \$300,000 aggregate limit for bodily injury and \$25,000 for property damage, or
- \$300,000 single limit for bodily injury and property damage of \$300,000 for occurrence and aggregate limits.

Previous minimums were set at \$100,000 per occurrence, which included \$10,000 in property damage coverage.

Also under the law, licensees must have on file with the commissioner of labor and industry a certificate evidencing insurance. The certificate provides that the insurance cannot be cancelled without the insurer first giving 15 days written notice to the commissioner.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

Pam Perri Weaver, executive vice president for the Builders Association of Minnesota, told a House committee that Minnesota has nearly 13,000 licensed contractors. Over the course of the last five years, the content of general liability insurance for builders has deteriorated and the new law clearly defines what coverage builders should have.

[HF1364/SF1168*/CH9](#)

— P. OSTBERG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Break for small cities

More small cities could be in the position to bring in small businesses, if a bill, sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview), is approved.

[HF406](#) would expand the small cities definition under the Tax Increment Financing Act to include any city with a population under 5,000 whose border does not abut a city with a population of 10,000 or more. An additional 113 small cities could be eligible under this bill.

The bill was held over by the House Taxes Committee March 26 for possible inclusion

in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF782](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), was laid over March 8 by the Senate Taxes Committee.

"I would ask that we at least make it fair," Welti said. "Give them the tools to bring in business."

Tax Increment Financing uses the additional property taxes paid as a result of development in the district to pay for part of the development costs.

Under current law, a city must be located at least 10 miles from a city with a population of 10,000 or more to qualify for TIF districts.

Welti said that this bill would create an even playing field for small cities.

Qualifying as a small city under the TIF act would allow the city to use economic development TIF districts for small commercial developments, like retail, office space and similar developments. Cities that don't qualify as small cities can use TIF districts only for industries like manufacturing, research and development and warehousing.

— S. HEGMAN

MILITARY

Consumer contract cancellations

House approval was given to a bill that would help military personnel and their families get out of consumer contracts without penalty when they are called to duty or their duty station changes.

The March 22 vote was 131-0 in support of [HF532](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley). It was received the same day by the Senate and referred to the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee. [Sen. Sharon L. Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona) is the Senate sponsor.

"This allows service members to focus on more important things, like taking care of their family and other business arrangements," Winkler said.

Under the bill, protection would be offered in areas that likely affect younger soldiers, such as being able to cancel a cell phone, satellite television, Internet service or membership travel contract without penalty. It also prohibits utilities from disconnecting service if a member of the household has been ordered into active duty.

It would be applicable to contracts executed by or on behalf of a person called to active duty or for a permanent change of duty station which would result in it being impractical for the person to enjoy the contract benefits.

"There is a 30-day window for the wireless telephone cancellation," Winkler said.

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

"There is not a 30-day window for the service contracts. It simply states the termination is effective upon notification."

This bill would also extend protections of the federal [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#), which provides relief from rent, mortgage interest rates, credit card interest rates and other costs that service members incur when they are called to activity duty, to any business wholly owned by the servicemember.

— M. COOK

Bonus for the officers

Commissioned officers in the National Guard could qualify for a reenlistment bonus, as well as a \$1,000 tuition reimbursement grant.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph), and passed by the House 131-1 March 27, [HF1594](#) would expand the bonus program, currently only available to enlisted personnel, to the Guard's commissioned officers. The bill awaits action in the Senate, where Sen. Ann Lynch (DFL-Rochester) is the sponsor.

The bill would also establish annually 25 postsecondary education reimbursement grants, up to \$1,000 each. The grants would be available, on a competitive basis, to current National Guard members or a person who agrees to join. The money would be for reimbursement of postsecondary education expenses not covered by other awards that may be available to the member.

Hosch said the bill is a request from the Minnesota National Guard to help with its recruitment efforts, and the cost would be absorbed through the agency's budget.

— L. SCHUTZ

TRANSPORTATION

Financing plan leaves House

A bill that would increase the state's gas tax and potentially raise other taxes to help pay for transportation needs received House approval March 24 on an 83-46 vote.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF946](#) was rejected by the Senate, which passed its own version ([SF1986](#)) 42-24 one day earlier. A conference committee is expected to work out the differences. The Senate sponsor is Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing).

The bill calls for a 5 cent increase in the state's gas tax in each of the next two fiscal years, a potential sales tax increase of 0.5 percent, increased license tab fees, the removal of a vehicle registration fee cap and \$1 billion in bonding. It also establishes a funding

formula for the motor vehicle sales tax revenue now fully dedicated to transportation.

Minnesota's gas tax hasn't increased from 20 cents per gallon since 1988.

The Senate plan would increase the tax by 10 cents on July 1, 2007, and automatically increase it based on inflation in future years.

The higher tax, according to Lieder, would cost drivers \$5 more per month, assuming they drive 11,000 miles annually in a car that gets 20 miles per gallon.

Supporters said the money is needed to fund transit and transportation systems that are widely recognized to need more than \$2 billion in improvement.

Some Republican members said the debate was an effort in futility because [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) has indicated he will veto the bill.

"This is not a solution, in part, because of the gas tax increase," said [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria). "Let's not send the governor a bill he's going to veto. What a waste of our time."

"If we're operating by a veto threat we don't even need to be here," Lieder countered.

It would take 90 votes to override a veto, and although four Republicans supported the bill, one of them, [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount), said he supported this bill to move it forward, but wouldn't support an override attempt.

Among the unsuccessful amendments offered was one by [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata) which would have required voter approval before a joint powers board could impose a sales tax increase in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for transportation. It failed 66-63.

Under the bill, only counties outside the metropolitan area could impose the tax, subject to voter approval.

Supporters, including [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina), said members need to go back one year to the Twins stadium debate to see that taxes have been imposed without voter approval.

"Building a stadium is not a core government function, and it makes sense to let the people weigh in on something like that," added [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). "Building roads and funding our education system are core government functions. It's at the heart of what our job responsibility is."

— M. COOK

Policy provisions plowing ahead

Committee approval was given to a bill that would impose a number of transportation policy changes.

Among the issues addressed by [HF1351](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), are traffic regulations, vehicle

registration, [Department of Transportation](#) planning reports, towing authority, railway safety and truck size and weight restrictions.

Approved March 23 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill awaits actions by the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

"There is no General Fund money in this bill," Hornstein said.

One of the more controversial items is a requirement that MnDOT prepare two cost estimates for trunk highway projects: the cost to have department employees perform the work and costs if it is done by a contract recipient. A contract valued at \$250,000 or more could only be entered into if the contract costs are below those projected by the department, the quality would meet or exceed that produced by the department and the contract is in the public interest. Although the department is against this provision, supporters say this is an accountability measure.

"There are some things that we need to know about, and this is a step in the right direction," said [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston).

The department would also need to:

- develop a plan to reduce motor vehicle greenhouse gas emissions;
- annually report on major highway projects for that year and the following 15;
- perform a study of speed limits on local roads;
- review the state's long-term transportation needs, and identify the strategies to meet those needs; and
- perform towing duties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, under certain circumstances.

For Minnesotans that rely on transit assistance, the bill would require that paratransit services that receive state assistance allow trip scheduling up to four days in advance, guarantee same-day trips of 25 miles or less, and provide service at least 14 hours a day, unless that threshold is already met by one or more other providers.

— M. COOK

Where to find information

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Ag's new possibilities

Omnibus proposal is more than corn, beans and cows

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

Agriculture in Minnesota is no longer just about corn, beans and cows on the "Back 40." It's also about putting Minnesota on the fast track to greater use of its resources for next generation fuels, and making the Minnesota Grown logo more recognizable and products more available.

The omnibus proposal put forward by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division reflects the change, according to the sponsor of [HF2227, Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar).

The bill takes a comprehensive look at agriculture that will "get people really interested and involved in the future of agriculture in the state," said [Rep. Brad Finstad](#) (R-Comfrey).

The proposal to spend \$134.5 million during the 2008-09 biennium is a combination of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's initiatives and proposals brought forward by the division, the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee and its Veterans Affairs Division. Passed by the finance division March 28, the bill was referred to the House Finance Committee. The companion bill, [SF1925](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), passed the Senate 66-0 March 22, but was tabled.

Called a bipartisan effort, Juhnke urged committee members to stay in support of the bill as attempts are made along the way to amend the bill, possibly dooming it to failure. And if the ag portion of the bill goes down, more than \$14.4 million in 2008 and another \$13.7 million in 2009 in veterans programming would go with it, he said.

There is little difference between the governor and the House on funding veterans programs over the 2008-09 biennium. And there is nearly agreement with the amount budgeted for the Department of Agriculture — the House at \$91 million and the governor at approximately \$94 million. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to how those funds should be spent.

New fuels, next move

A cornerstone to the governor's energy proposal this session is the NextGen BioEnergy Initiative, which has several components and is addressed in both the omnibus agriculture and energy finance bills.

The ag bill ups the governor's proposal to have 20 percent of the energy consumed in the state be derived from renewable resources by 2020 to 25 percent by 2025.

Through the department, the governor seeks \$10 million for grants to projects that would replace energy from fossil fuels with energy from renewable biomass. The House cuts that funding to \$4.4 million and broadens the scope to cellulosic bioenergy and biofuel projects, as well as grants to nongovernmental organizations to develop structures that promote local ownership of these plants.

By cutting the appropriation, Juhnke said money would be freed up for other ag-related projects.

Funds to be appropriated in the second year of the biennium would be awarded by a new NextGen Energy Board, which would be created in the first year of the biennium. The board would also research and report to the commissioner of agriculture and the Legislature on how the state can invest its resources to achieve energy independence. The board would be charged with developing grant programs to assist locally owned facilities move the state toward energy independence through the production of bioenergy.

The bill would award \$200,000 to several projects for design and feasibility work in 2008. Juhnke said these projects could serve as models for other projects that may be of interest to the new board. The bill also calls for a new Bioenergy Advisory Committee to represent various rural economic viewpoints to the new NextGen board.

Ethanol is still gold


The greatest share of the proposed Department of Agriculture budget is a \$30 million allocation for ethanol producer payments.

Ten ethanol plants in Minnesota are now eligible to receive producer payments, a program initiated in 1986 to get the budding industry off the ground. Each plant enrolled in the payment program is eligible for payment based on gallons of ethanol produced up to a maximum amount of \$3 million for each of the 10 years they can participate in the program.

Minnesota Grown

Called one of the most successful agricultural marketing programs at the department by the governor, the Minnesota Grown logo is drawing attention to the products grown in Minnesota. The bill hopes to increase awareness of products not only grown but "processed or manufactured" in the state, along with increasing participation in the program. It would raise the fee from \$5 to \$20 for anyone wanting to obtain a license to use the label and it would expand the use of the Minnesota Grown account to include revenue from fees and the development and sale of promotional materials, gifts and other appropriations. In supporting the measure, division members said that the label should be promoted in other states.

Other provisions in the bill include:

- establishment of a 12-member Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council;
- a 40-cent check-off fee that would be charged by any person selling fertilizer to state producers, only if the board asks for it and it is approved by the Legislature;
- establishment of a food safety and defense task force to advise the governor and Legislature on food issues and food safety;
- deletion of existing rules and authorization for the Board of Animal Health to create new rules for control of bovine tuberculosis;
- an extension on the sunset for the moratorium on new open air swine basins; and
- designation of family agriculture revitalization zones. 

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

Helping the littlest learners

Early childhood bill calls for some increased program funding

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

When the omnibus early childhood learning finance bill was released, there was some disappointment at the level of funding it received.

However, the chairwoman of the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division was pleased that the bill would address goals that the division set forth at the beginning of the session.

"We wanted to accomplish four goals: move to close the achievement gap, highlight citizen engagement, provide more child care experiences and increase innovative efforts," [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) said.

But others were less than pleased.

"You were given a dollar to fix a \$100 problem," said Chad Dunkley, president of the Minnesota Child Care Association. A 1 percent rate increase is a little hard to swallow, he said.

[Rep. Pat Garofalo](#) (R-Farmington) questioned the value placed on this area by the

House DFL caucus. "I don't understand how members of the opposite party can identify early childhood as a top priority, when the fact of the matter is out of the \$800 million in (proposed) tax increases not one nickel came to this committee."

Sponsored by Slawik, [HF1056](#) was approved March 26 by the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division and March 28 by the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division. It awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF839](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

In the House plan, early childhood would receive a \$64 million bump: \$34 million to the base and \$30 million in one-time funding.

The bill, however, will be split in two, according to Slawik.

Half will be tacked onto the omnibus health care and human services finance bill, while the

other half will be added to the omnibus K-12 education finance bill.

Child care provisions

Daycare and early child care education providers could see relief from high licensing fees that have created hardships for some providers, and receive extra training.

The bill would limit county fees to \$50 a year. Background checks for licensed home day care providers, which were \$100 and had to be paid by providers, would be paid by the state.

Unlicensed child care providers receiving child care assistance funding would receive a one-time home visit by the state to receive information on health, safety and school readiness.

Most Minnesota families, at some point, use a family member, friend or neighbor to watch their children while at work. A one-time \$1.5 million grant for the family, friend and neighbor grant program would provide training, support and resources to caregivers to promote children's early literacy, healthy development and school readiness.

A two-hour voluntary professional training system with incentives and support for new child care practitioners would also be provided.

The bill would also add people found guilty of wrongfully obtaining public assistance to the list of those that cannot be authorized to be a legal non-licensed childcare provider. In current law, people who have committed certain felonies or misdemeanors within the past seven years are ineligible to be a legal child care provider.

Education preparedness

Slawik believes the most prominent part of the bill is the restoration of funding for Head Start and school readiness programs that should help close the achievement gap.

Head Start funding would be restored to the pre-2003 level, before cuts were made when the state was buried under a \$4.5 billion deficit.

Head Start would receive \$40.2 million over the biennium. With the funding increase it would be able to provide full-day services in their own program or in cooperation with licensed full-day child care programs.

Early Ed continued on page 23



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rayyan Z. Abdur Razzaq, 2, who came to the "Plant the Seeds - Help Children Bloom" rally with the St. Paul Rondo ECFE program, smells one of the paper flowers that decorated the Rotunda March 29. Early learning advocates, parents and child care providers came to the Capitol to encourage support for early childhood programs.

Energy's next generation

Renewable power gets a boost in energy finance bill

By Nick Busse

When Gov. Tim Pawlenty called for “comprehensive historic renewable energy legislation” in his State of the State address, he also encouraged legislators to “add your own good ideas.”

Members of the House Energy Finance and Policy Division, led by division chairman [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), are taking him at his word.

[HF1392](#), sponsored by Hilty, is the division's omnibus energy finance bill. It would provide for a host of new investments in renewable and alternative energy sources like wind, solar, hydrogen and biofuels. The bill accounts for a sizeable chunk of Pawlenty's “Next Generation Energy Initiative” — albeit with some key differences from the governor's proposals.

Hilty said the differences are mostly noncontroversial, however.

“I think we've been pretty consistent with the goals that the governor's had. ... I don't see that there's anything that's highly controversial or objectionable in any of it,” he said.

Those goals include expanding the number of gas stations in the state that sell E85 and funding competitive grant programs for research into renewable energy. Hilty and the division have added a few of their own ideas, including new investments in hydrogen power and rural wind energy.

The overall price tag is different as well: Hilty's bill would have a net impact of approximately \$67.9 million on the General Fund over the next two fiscal years — \$33,000 less than House DFL leaders' spending target, but nearly \$8 million more than the governor's proposal.

[Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake), the division's top Republican, called the bill “generally, fairly good.” He and other Republicans have taken issue with language in the bill relating to mortgage originator license fees (the bill contains a number of provisions relating to the Department of Commerce that are unrelated to energy) and certain other

provisions, but for the most part, he said he's satisfied with the outcome.

Diverse technologies

The bill encompasses a wide array of renewable energy technologies and programs, from solar to hydroelectric and just about everything in between.

“There's research and development in every area. We're not trying to pick winners and losers,” Hilty said.

The “E85 Everywhere” initiative, which aims to expand the number of ethanol fueling stations in the state by way of a cost-sharing grant program, would get \$8 million — \$4 million less than the governor's recommendation. Hilty said federal actions may soon allow gas stations in Minnesota

to sell E20, which would also help increase ethanol use in the state.

Hydrogen power, considered one of the cleanest renewable energy technologies, would get a significant boost from the bill in the form of a \$10 million competitive grant program. The Department of Commerce would be directed to create a vision, goals, timeline and strategies for deploying hydrogen power in Minnesota, and then implement the program accordingly.

Wind power, key to meeting the state's newly adopted renewable energy standard, would get a helping hand in the form of a \$2 million rural wind energy development assistance program and also a \$3.25 million revolving loan program.

Research initiatives also figure prominently in the bill. Xcel Energy would be directed to transfer \$5 million to the Department of Commerce to fund a competitive grant program for renewable energy research projects. Xcel would also have to transfer an additional \$5 million to the department for a number of other programs, including a \$1 million “technical analysis and demonstration” project focusing on plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

Also included in the bill is a \$3 million grant in fiscal year 2009 to the University of Minnesota's Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment for various renewable energy research projects. Another \$10 million would be appropriated during fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Other highlights of the bill include:

- a program that would give cash bonuses to state employees who make energy-efficiency suggestions that save the state money;
- \$4 million for preliminary engineering, permitting and development of a steam plant in St. Paul;
- \$500,000 in rebates for solar electricity projects; and
- \$60,000 for a feasibility study on hydroelectric generation at the Rapidan Dam in Blue Earth County.

The division approved the bill March 28 and sent it to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF1282](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), was laid over March 13 by the Senate Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Budget Division.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

E85 pumps could become a more common sight in the state under the provisions of the omnibus energy finance bill.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

One of the ideas spawned from the property taxpayer hot line, would be reinstatement of the “this old house” program. Under the provision, homeowners, like the owner of this historic St. Paul home, could exclude for 10 years the increase in value due to a new improvement made to a home at least 50 years old.

By **SONJA HEGMAN**

Rep. Paul Marquart is on a mission to provide significant property tax relief to every corner of the state.

The DFL legislator from Dilworth presented his plan to the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division March 26. As chairman of the division, Marquart has repeatedly made it known that property tax relief is something that must happen this year. After \$2.3 billion in property tax increases since 2001, Marquart is delivering on his pledge.

The report, [HF3](#), would provide \$543 million in property tax relief over the next two bienniums — \$443 million in 2008-09 and about \$100 million in 2010-11.

“We actually do provide real cuts,” Marquart said.

Without state aid relief, property taxes, according to the February forecast, are expected to increase 8.8 percent. Marquart’s plan would reduce taxes by 3.4 percent. The amount a homeowner pays would be based on their income.

“We wanted to provide relief to those who

needed it most and that’s our seniors, our families and our farmers,” Marquart said.

The cuts would be offset by a fourth tier income tax, affecting the state’s wealthiest taxpayers.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has said he will veto any income tax increases.

Ability to pay

The report, which now moves to the House Taxes Committee, is based largely on a homeowner’s ability to pay, which Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) said will be the core of the omnibus tax bill.

“We have a very regressive property tax in this state,” Lenczewski said during a March 26 press conference. “This will provide relief to homeowners.”

Marquart’s division report will be rolled into that bill, but changes could still be made in the taxes committee or during expected conference committee meetings with the Senate.

Many bills the property tax division heard this year dealt with expanding the property

tax refund. To answer that, a new homestead credit state refund would replace two current programs. It would phase out the homestead market value credit and repeal the property tax refund. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the new homestead property tax refund would have two parts:

- A refund equal to a percentage of the homeowner’s property taxes that exceeds 2 percent of household income. The refund or credit rates range from 90 percent for very low-income filers to 25 percent for upper income filers, up to \$150,000. The maximum credit would be \$2,500. The existing property tax refund has a maximum income limit of \$92,980 and a maximum refund of \$1,740.
- A minimum refund would be guaranteed for a three-year period from 2008-2010 based solely on the homestead market value credit. This guarantee would be provided directly on the property tax statement. The homestead property tax refund must be applied for because it is based on income

and equals 100 percent of the market value credit for pay in 2008; 60 percent for pay in 2009; and 30 percent for pay in 2010. Beginning in 2011, no minimum guarantee unrelated to income would be provided.

The bill would also increase the maximum renter property tax refund by about 6 percent, from \$1,430 to \$1,500. The maximum eligible income would increase from \$50,160 to \$60,000.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) successfully amended the bill extending the limited market credit for two more years. The vote was 6-5. While he said the bill was put together to reflect things fairly, he's still uncomfortable with taxpayers filling out a form for the new refund.

"It's not good tax policy," he said. "I'm still going to work on a way to include that on the income tax form."

Citizens have a say

Part of the division report was based on a Citizens Omnibus Property Tax Bill that was compiled from e-mails and phone calls to a property tax hot line for two months starting at the end of January. Marquart sponsors [HF2142](#) with the idea of "bringing ideas from the kitchen table to the committee table."

One of those ideas would allow homeowners to pay their property taxes in eight equal installments from May 15 to Dec. 15, rather than in just two payments under the current system. It would also require homeowners desiring this option to apply to the county by April 15 of the year the taxes must be paid. Though this ties in with a person's ability to pay, some county groups do not like idea.

Keith Carlson, executive director of the Minnesota Inter-County Association, said he is concerned about this option because it will affect the cash-flow of every local government.

"I support the bill's focus on homeowners," he said during the division's markup of the report March 28. "But there is nothing stopping homeowners from (paying monthly) now. It's simply a non-issue."

Other provisions of the property tax section would include:

- expanding eligibility for the senior citizen property tax deferral program;

- establishing a seasonal recreational property tax deferral program;
- reinstituting the "this old house" program, which would exclude for 10 years the increase in value due to a new improvement made to a home at least 50 years old;
- requiring the commissioner of revenue, in consultation with county officials, to improve public awareness and participation in property tax relief programs;
- requiring cities with a population of more than 2,500 and counties to prepare and send a supplemental proposed property tax notice under certain circumstances; and
- requiring studies of the costs of the truth in taxation program and the level of taxpayer participation at the hearings and of the fiscal disparities program

Local option sales tax

The bill "shuts and bolts the door" on any future local option sales taxes, according to Marquart.

Under the bill, local governments may impose a general sales tax if permitted by a special law enacted before Jan. 1, 2008. It prohibits a local government from seeking authority for a local sales tax after Jan. 1, 2008, or from spending any of its own revenues to advertise, promote or hold an election for a referendum to support imposing a local sales tax.

Currently, 14 cities in Greater Minnesota and two counties have local option sales taxes, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department. But Lenczewski, who opposes local option sales taxes, said 44 cities should be added to that because all of Hennepin County has a local sales tax "imposed by the Legislature to pay for a stadium."

"It exacerbates disparities between cities," Lenczewski said. "Large cities would be huge winners. We either need to get rid of (local option sales taxes) or give them to everyone."

She added that a local sales tax is a revenue source that will also cause deductions in local government aid appropriations. But before the door is locked forever, the bill would allow Duluth, Bemidji, Crookston and North Mankato to sneak in. Each city would use

the sales tax for specific projects within their city.

"We've got to lock the door sometime," Marquart said.

Local aid


Over the next two years, the bill would reduce school district property tax levies by \$133 million, and state aid to cities, counties and townships would increase by \$78 million. Though local governments would be able to hold down their property taxes, they could still increase their levies.

Right now, it is unclear whether the school levy portion of the report will stay in the taxes committee or move on separately to an education committee, Marquart said.

The local government aid portion of the report would increase by \$60 million in 2008. Modifications to the program would:

- increase the city aid base portion of LGA for Newport, Taylors Falls, Rockville and Browns Valley;
- provide a \$3 per capita LGA payment to towns beginning with aids payable in 2008;
- increase the appropriation for county program aid by \$15 million for aids payable in 2008, an increase of approximately 7.5 percent over current law;
- provide for an inflation adjustment for city LGA and county program aid appropriations. The size of the adjustment depends on city organizations developing a consensus on the LGA formula in the future; and
- provide that aid formulas reflect changes in property tax bases caused by utility property valuations and the casino in Mahanomen in a timely fashion.

Louis Jambois, speaking on behalf of the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, said he liked the comprehensive nature of the bill, but had concerns about LGA. He said the LGA portion doesn't recognize the need for additional resources in the outer-ring metro area.

"(Having) winners and losers will result in angst and conflict," he said. "It doesn't mean we don't support growth, but there will be a problem reaching a consensus." 

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Stiffer penalties and victim support

Public safety finance bill proposes \$1.89 billion in spending

By CRAIG GREEN

With language from 71 different bills, the omnibus public safety finance bill covers several areas: appropriations; general crime; DWI and driving related provisions; crime victims; courts and public defenders; corrections; public safety and law enforcement; and emergency communications.

Sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF829](#) was approved March 29 by the House Public Safety Finance Division and sent to the House Finance Committee.

The Senate version, [SF1992](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed 64-0 by the Senate March 23 before being tabled.

Where the money might go

For the upcoming biennium, [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) has recommended a public safety budget of nearly \$1.88 billion, a 9 percent increase from the 2006-07 biennium. This also represents a \$142.6 million increase, or 8.3 percent, above the 2008-09 base budget.

With input from the House Public Safety Finance Division and the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, the bill proposes spending \$1.89 billion from the General Fund, which is more than \$12 million above the governor's recommendation. Some of the specifics include:

- \$12.5 million to the Office of Justice Programs for crime victim services, law enforcement emergency funds, auto-theft impound fee reimbursements and youth intervention programs;
- \$4.5 million to the District Courts for mandated services, six new judgeships and 12 new drug courts;
- \$3.1 million to the Public Defense Board that may be used for staffing, administration and transcript costs; and

- \$2 million to the Department of Corrections for offender re-entry programs and mentoring grants for incarcerated parents.

A number of bills focusing on crime and technology are in the omnibus bill.

[Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) sponsors [HF503](#), which would make using the Internet to solicit sex from a child a felony. According to Assistant Attorney General David Voigt, half the teenagers on the Internet communicate with someone they have not met. "This bill is about protecting children in the Internet age," Voigt said. "Sexual predators have unprecedented access to children, and unfortunately, an unprecedented opportunity to anonymity in communicating with children."

[HF2205](#), sponsored by [Rep. Karla Bigham](#) (DFL-Cottage Grove) would allow courts to give repeat sex offenders a life sentence, even if there is only one previous sex offense conviction. Current statute requires two or more convictions.

Another bill, [HF2265](#), would require anyone released on supervised release or parole with a violent crime conviction to submit to an on-demand search by a probation or peace officer. When this was presented, [Rep.](#)

[Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) asked the bill's sponsor, [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), if there is a danger of going too far by giving law enforcement this much authority.

Mullery said that it's time to do what's needed to stop crime. "I don't think we're going too far. It's the criminals that are going too far."

Crime victims

[HF1841](#), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), would allow victims of domestic violence to terminate a residential lease, provided they pay one additional month's rent after the tenant vacates the residence.

In testimony before the House Crime Victims Subcommittee March 16, witnesses shared their experiences as victims of abuse.

Loreline Arevalos said that after she was beaten by her ex-boyfriend so badly that her eyes were swollen shut, she told her landlord that she wanted to break the lease on her apartment so that she could move somewhere safer. Her landlord, understanding of her situation, told Arevalos that she would still be responsible for the remaining rent on the lease.

Melinda Hugdahl, a family law attorney with the Legal Services Advocacy Project in St. Paul, said that domestic abuse victims in these situations usually have few options. "Leave the premises and face a judgment for unpaid rent, or remain on the premises in a dangerous, often life-threatening environment," Hugdahl said.

Younger criminals

At the March 22 meeting of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) spoke about 2-year-old Emily Johnson who was killed by a young man who was 13 years, 11 months and one week. He was just days shy of being eligible to be charged as an adult.

For anyone to say the young man didn't know what he was doing is hard to argue and hard to believe, especially as we see more juvenile crime occurring, Westrom said.

He then offered an amendment that would lower the age a juvenile could be charged as an adult from 14 to 13. Although Mullery, chairman of the committee, was in full support, he was concerned that adding any amendments would stall the bill. Mullery said that he had spoken with [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and they both agreed to work on this issue over the summer.

Westrom then withdrew the amendment.



"I don't think we're going too far. It's the criminals that are going too far."

— Rep. Joe Mullery

Friday, March 23

HF2319-Welti (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Prostate cancer screening program established.

HF2320-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance
Pollution Control Agency funding provided to fully characterize emissions from biomass gasification facilities.

HF2321-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance
Biomass gasification facilities air emissions assessment study authorized.

HF2322-Atkins (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota Milestones utilization enhancement provided and report required.

HF2323-Mullery (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota State Retirement System correctional state employees retirement plan actuarial cost estimate of including sentence-to-service crew leaders provided.

HF2324-Winkler (DFL)

Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Housing with services establishment conditions modified.

HF2325-Winkler (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
DWI offenders; ignition interlocks use provided.

HF2326-Hornstein (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division
Failure to yield right-of-way to buses on highway shoulders enforcement and penalties provided.

HF2327-Haws (DFL)

Finance
Business incubator for startup science-based companies funding provided.

HF2328-Haws (DFL)

Finance
Regional inter-local service sharing grants provided relating to delivery of public safety services.

HF2329-Howes (R)

Taxes
Homestead local option disaster abatement provisions modified.

HF2330-Juhnke (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts Ice Fishing Weekend license exemption provided.

HF2331-Clark (DFL)

Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division
Eviction records maintained by courts and tenant screening services deletion and expungement provided.

HF2332-Kalin (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Human services permanent bar to set aside a disqualification modified.

HF2333-Ward (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public Employees Retirement Association police and fire plan disabled members authorized to elect to change the laws under which benefits are determined.

HF2334-Ward (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Rule adoption petitions requirements modified.

HF2335-Erickson (R)

Taxes
Princeton public facilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2336-Welti (DFL)

Finance
Board of Electricity fund transfer repealed.

HF2337-Welti (DFL)

E-12 Education
Earth and space, life and physical sciences assessment in grades 10 through 12 provided.

HF2338-Gunther (R)

Finance
Entrepreneurial and small business assistance grants provided.

HF2339-Berns (R)

Environment & Natural Resources
National Guard and reserve members who have served outside the United States provided free angling and hunting licenses.

HF2340-Berns (R)

Taxes
School district leased property exempted from taxation under certain circumstances.

HF2341-Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
St. Paul Teachers Retirement Fund Association and Special School District No. 625, St. Paul, contribution and aid payments modified, and new amortization target date provided.

HF2342-Buesgens (R)

E-12 Education
Medical technology charter schools authorized.

HF2343-Abeler (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Medical liability actions regulated, and inadmissibility of certain health care provider statements and conduct provided.

HF2344-Brod (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Unfunded local mandates prohibited and local mandate review board established.

HF2345-Peppin (R)

E-12 Education
Parent Choice in Education act adopted.

HF2346-Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Retirement bounce-back annuity authorized when provided for by a marriage dissolution decree.

Saturday, March 24

HF2347-Dill (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public Employees Retirement Association disability benefits payment required.

HF2348-Erhardt (R)

Taxes
Seasonal-recreational property tax refund provided.

HF2349-Faust (DFL)

Commerce & Labor
Liquor sales; "person of questionable character" defined as any person whose driver's license restricts the person from consuming any alcohol at any time.

HF2350-Brod (R)

Health & Human Services
Certain vaccines containing mercury prohibited and providers required to notify patients when a vaccine contains more than a trace of mercury.

HF2351-Johnson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor
Cable communications systems regulation modified and state-authorized video providers regulated.

HF2352-Demmer (R)

Finance
Science teacher grants provided for additional laboratory time.

HF2353-Hortman (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division
Congestion Reduction Task Force established, Urban Partnership agreement application required and participation authorized.

HF2354-Fritz (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Tilt-A-Whirl designated as the State Amusement Ride.

HF2355-Erickson (R)

E-12 Education
Health and safety revenue for school districts use criteria specified.

Monday, March 26

HF2356-Clark (DFL)

Finance
HOME Line tenant hot line services program funding provided.

HF2357-Rukavina (DFL)

Finance
Virginia industrial park development funding provided.

HF2358-Olson (R)

Taxes
Shared city township levies under orderly annexation agreements exempted from levy limits.

HF2359-Olson (R)

Taxes
Capital gain income tax exclusion authorized.

HF2360-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Tax volatility reduction account established, and adjustments in the account made based on forecasts of state revenue gains and losses.

HF2361-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Public pension fund financial reporting requirements modified.

HF2362-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Sales and use tax study required.

HF2363-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota State Retirement System correctional state employees' retirement; Human Services employees authorized to make back equivalent member contributions and transfer pension service credit.

HF2364-Dettmer (R)
Commerce & Labor
Horse racing licenses revoked unless live racing is conducted.

HF2365-Holberg (R)
Taxes
Sales tax rebate provided.

Tuesday, March 27

HF2366-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Monticello; radiation emissions report required.

HF2367-Dean (R)
E-12 Education
Charter school students authorized to participate in extracurricular activities in their resident school district.

HF2368-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Garrison wastewater treatment facility funding provided.

HF2369-Tillberry (DFL)
E-12 Education
School districts required to provide notice when counseling services are being performed by non-licensed personnel.

HF2370-Greiling (DFL)
E-12 Education
Joint legislative committee established to study merging the Office of Higher Education into the Department of Education and appointments provided.

HF2371-Bigham (DFL)
Finance
Trunk Highway 10/61 corridor; Cottage Grove corridor vista enhancement project funding provided.

HF2372-Eken (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Trailer and tractor semiannual registration established.

HF2373-Fritz (DFL)
Finance
Job Skills Partnership Board funding provided to provide training for bar and restaurant employees to transition to other employment.

HF2374-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Public pension plan data classification provisions modified.

HF2375-Peterson, N. (R)
Commerce & Labor
Legal recognition of electronic records and signatures required relating to insurance.

HF2376-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles and neighborhood electric vehicles projects funding provided.

Thursday, March 29

HF2377-Garofalo (R)
Commerce & Labor
Prevailing wage provisions modified.

HF2378-Sviggun (R)
Health & Human Services
No constitutional right to abortion established and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2379-Sviggun (R)
Health & Human Services
State funds prohibited for abortion services unless expressly authorized by the Legislature, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2380-Sviggun (R)
Commerce & Labor
State department and local government construction contracts regulated.

HF2381-Davnie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Workers' compensation, retraining and fee provisions modified; advisory commission established; and report and rulemaking required.

HF2382-Erickson (R)
Commerce & Labor
State lottery video terminals authorized, revenue uses provided, lawful gambling taxes modified and technical corrections provided.

HF2383-Erickson (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Isle local sales tax authorized.

HF2384-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Solar Energy Advancement Act of 2007 adopted establishing a rebate program for installation of solar technologies funded by a surcharge on retail electricity bills.

HF2385-Solberg (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
Wood products manufacturing plants required to be maintained for a period of time after closing.

HF2386-Olin (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Oakland Park Nursing Home pension benefits provided upon privatization.

HF2387-Haws (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division
Higher education students required to sign a written waiver if they choose not to be vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

HF2388-Cornish (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Ginseng designation report required.

HF2389-Atkins (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Good faith insurance practices required relating to claims and report required.

HF2390-Olson (R)
Transportation Finance Division
Freeway shoulders use authorized for transit and metro mobility buses, and limited use of bus stops permitted for motor vehicle passenger carriers.

HF2391-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Metropolitan area transit and paratransit capital expenditures additional financing provided.

HF2392-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Minnesota Securities Act modified.

HF2393-Hamilton (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Lakefield Nursing Home pension benefits provided upon privatization.

HF2394-Lesch (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Uniform Real Property Electronic Recording Act provided.

HF2395-Davnie (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Teachers Retirement Association Minneapolis teacher retirement annuity increase provided to correct an erroneous benefit estimate.

HF2396-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
White road and trail project funding provided.

HF2397-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Aurora wastewater treatment facility funding provided.


HF2398-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Iron Junction water and sewer extensions funding provided.

Early Ed continued from page 17

Neighborhood Circulators could receive grants up to \$175,000 for the biennium to provide two buses in St. Paul. One bus now operates on the city's West side to link students to libraries, parks and recreational centers after school and on Saturdays.

Early childhood community hubs would receive \$2 million in one-time money for the biennium to coordinate and improve families' access to community early childhood care and education, schools, health services and help with developmental needs. One hub would be located in a rural district, one in the suburbs and one in an urban area. "The hubs idea is really innovative," Slawik said.

The governor's proposed scholarship demonstration project has been pared down from \$28.9 million to \$2.5 million in one-time money during the biennium, and only two pilot programs would be created. Parents or guardians of a 4-year-old child with household incomes less than or equal to 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines would be eligible to receive a \$4,000 scholarship.

The hope with the scholarship program is to create competition between the various day care providers to provide better and more comprehensive early education experiences. 

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Blood donation

| | |
|---|---------|
| Approximate number of times a heart beats daily | 100,000 |
| Percent of population eligible to donate blood | 60 |
| Percent that donates..... | 5 |
| Lives that can be saved with one pint of blood..... | 3 |
| Estimated pints of blood in a man | 12 |
| In a woman | 10 |
| Units of blood that need to be collected each month by the | |
| Mid-America Division Blood Services, which serves 250 hospitals in | |
| 10 states, to meet patient need | 54,000 |
| Approximate number of volunteer blood donors in the division | 800,000 |
| Approximate number of blood drive coordinators | 6,200 |
| Minimum number of days for a person between blood donations | 55 |
| Estimated total time, in minutes, it takes to give blood, including registration and | |
| refreshments | 45-60 |
| Times per 12-month period a person can donate plasma..... | 13 |
| Number of Red Cross chapters in Minnesota..... | 22 |
| Number of Red Cross volunteers in Minnesota for fiscal year ending June 30, 2006..... | 15,648 |
| Number of registered disaster volunteers | 1,271 |
| Number of Minnesota disaster responses..... | 802 |
| Number of families assisted in disasters | 983 |
| Minnesotans enrolled in a Red Cross health and safety class | 286,608 |
| Number of Minnesota case services provided for military personnel and families..... | 3,266 |
| Minimum age to donate blood in Minnesota..... | 17 |
| Minimum weight, in pounds..... | 110 |
| Hospitals served by the North Central Region of American Red Cross Blood Services, | |
| which serves Minnesota, western Wisconsin and eastern South Dakota..... | 109 |
| Volunteer blood donors..... | 127,000 |
| Pints donated annually | 240,000 |
| Number of blood drives..... | 5,000 |
| Approximate number of Americans who receive a blood transfusion | |
| each year, in millions..... | 5 |
| Number of seconds on average that someone in America needs blood | 2 |
| Percent of U.S. population that is O+ blood type | 38 |
| Percent that is A+ blood type | 34 |
| Percent that is B+ blood type | 9 |

— M. COOK

Sources: Mid-America Division Blood Services; Twin Cities Area and Northland chapters of the American Red Cross; Memorial Blood Centers.

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SESSION WEEKLY

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REALITY OF REENTRY

MORE FOR MOTHER NATURE

OMNIBUS BILLS ON THE ROLL

HF2399- HF2421

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: Rep. Tom Rukavina, chairman of the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, presents his committee's omnibus finance bill during a hearing of the House Finance Committee on April 12.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Members of the St. Paul-based 2nd Battalion, 147th Assault Helicopter Battalion salute as the colors are posted during a departure ceremony April 10. The 287 soldiers have been ordered to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

BY LEE ANN SCHUTZ

When it comes to advocating for the state's veterans, party affiliation means nothing to [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) and [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids).

The two became a familiar duo at committee tables this session as the sponsors of bills reflecting Gov. Tim Pawlenty's historic \$74.8 million military and veterans support package. Overall, this translates into a 51 percent increase for the departments of Military Affairs and Veterans Affairs over the previous biennium.

From education aid to tax breaks, the veterans and military initiatives put forth by Haws, Severson and others can be found sprinkled throughout several omnibus finance bills now making their way through the process.

A pairing by design

Severson's interest in veterans affairs is notable. Now serving his third term in the House, he is retired from the U.S. Navy after 25 years of service. He served as vice chairman

of the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Committee during the last biennium, when he sponsored at least nine bills relating to veterans affairs. He is outspoken about his view that the federal government does not live up to its "recruitment promises of education benefits and health care." He wants the state to help fill in the gap.

This year, with the unprecedented redeployment and scheduled August return of 2,500 Minnesota National Guard members — the greatest number of vets returning en masse in the state's history — veterans issues took on new urgency for Severson. He had a problem, however: his party lost control of the House. He began looking for a DFLer who would have as much passion as he did for "making things right for the veterans, and Minnesota a veteran-friendly state." He found it in Haws.

"He sought me out," Haws said. "We serve neighboring districts, and he knew about me because of my work with veterans when I was

First Reading continued on page 4

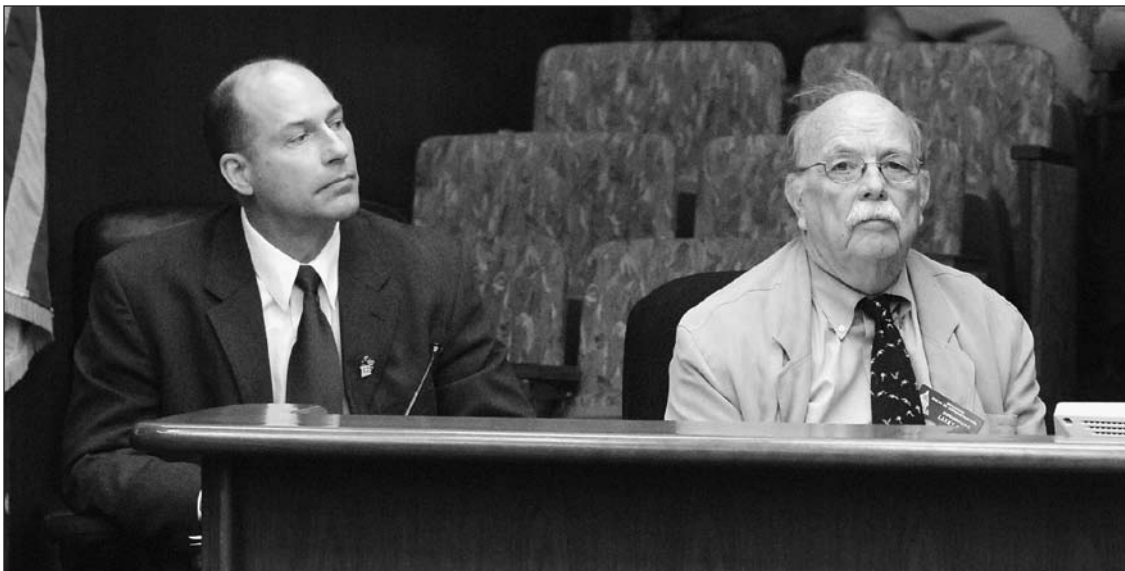


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Dan Severson, left, and Rep. Larry Haws crossed party lines and teamed up to sponsor more veterans and military-related bills than any other representatives so far this session. They could often be found together at the committee table presenting information.

First Reading continued from page 3

a Stearns County Commissioner.”

Haws said that over the years, he would visit missions and anywhere else homeless and down-on-their-luck veterans might be, “just to let them know someone cares” and to inform them of programs that might be of assistance.

And thus the team was formed.

So far this session, Haws is chief sponsor of 13 military or veterans-related bills, more than any other representative, and Severson sponsors seven, the second-most. Both have signed onto numerous other bills on the subject.

Vets ideas turn to bills

When a bill was up for discussion, as if warming up committee members for Severson’s more informational, to-the-point approach, Haws would oftentimes rattle off one-liners, grabbing the bill’s essence as well as the audience’s attention. “I loosen the crowd up and Severson comes in with information,” he said.

Haws said ideas for the proposed legislation came from veterans themselves. He characterized the bills picked to be included in Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s proposals “as moving from the grassroots up and from the top of the tree down.” Ideas from the Military Action Group, a consortium of veterans organizations, played a key role in the governor’s initiatives, Severson said.

Reaching out

A good share of the veterans provisions are contained in the omnibus agriculture, rural economies and veterans affairs finance bill, [HF2227](#), which received division approval

March 28 and is on its way to the House floor via the House Ways and Means Committee. Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), it would allot more than \$28.1 million in spending to the Department of Veterans Affairs and \$41.9 million to the Department of Military Affairs over the biennium. The bill’s companion, [SF1925](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), was tabled after being passed by the Senate 66-0 on March 23.

Most of the new programming proposed in the bill is targeted to outreach and helping returning vets get re-established in their communities.

County veteran service offices, considered the local contact points for veterans, would see programs expanded under the bill. While all 87 counties provide the service, it was an unfunded state mandate until 2006, when \$200,000 was budgeted.

More than \$2.8 million would be provided over the biennium to the base for programs and services at the county level.

According to Clark Dyrud, commissioner of veterans affairs, only about 50 percent of the veterans apply for benefits they have coming, and outreach on the local level is necessary to help the veterans reintegrate and learn about available programs.

To help support outreach, \$4 million in each year of the biennium would be available for tribal veterans service offices and a grant to the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans and other outreach programs.

The bill would also provide \$1 million over the biennium for expansion of the higher education veterans assistance programs,

which include informational offices on various campuses of higher education.

In each year of the biennium, \$1 million would be added to the base for the state soldier’s assistance program, which provides cash assistance in the form of shelter payments (rent and mortgage), utilities and personal needs grants to veterans who are unable to work as a result of temporary disability.

The bill would allocate \$80,000 in the first year of the biennium for suicide prevention and psychological support for veterans, along with \$30,000 for a telephone hotline to refer veterans to available psychological counseling services.

A one-time allocation of \$250,000 would be available for grants to assist World War II veterans to attend the dedication of the Minnesota World War II Veterans Memorial on the Capitol Mall on June 9, 2007.

The bill would also provide in each year of the biennium:

- More than \$300,000 for grants to veterans service organizations and for outreach to underserved veterans;
- \$500,000 for health screening exams for depleted uranium in Minnesota veterans;
- \$100,000 for compensation for honor guards at the funeral of veterans; and
- \$26,000 for an educational stipend for eligible spouses and children of deceased veterans.

Tax exemption for veterans

Called the “highlight of the governor’s bill” by Severson, [HF300](#), sponsored by Haws, is being considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. The bill expands the income tax subtraction for military service performed in Minnesota to all military pay effective for tax year 2007 and phased in over tax years 2007 to 2010.

“It is not just about rewarding service members for their service; this is about an investment in Minnesota’s future,” Severson said. Other states are exempting military benefits, and Minnesota will lose this pool of future employees as “this state will very quickly be one of the few states that tax veterans’ pensions,” he said.

The bill would also create a new income

Veterans continued on page 22

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held March 29-April 12 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Loan program for farmers gets funds

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Planting season is right around the corner, and a program that farmers, especially new farmers, look to for help in funding their operations will receive a fresh infusion of cash.

The [Rural Finance Authority](#) partners with local lenders to provide affordable credit to eligible farmers. During fiscal year 2006, more than \$14.7 million was loaned out through the program, effectively depleting its resources. As a result, the authority was unable to accept applications for five of its programs.

The new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 30, allows for a \$30 million bond issuance to fund the program this year.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), loan participants are charged full interest along with the principal. A reserve is also built into the program to cover potential losses. The law, effective March 31, 2007, gives first priority to the beginning farmer loan program.

[HF274*/SF227/CH16](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

BUSINESS

Trust company wording changes

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law, signed by the governor March 30, makes technical changes to statute relating to trust companies.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law, put forth by the Minnesota State Bar Association, inserts updated terms in [state statute](#).

"The only two examples here are that the terms 'executor' and 'administrator' are removed because they are no longer in use, and the term 'conservator' and 'personal representative' is substituted because that is

what is used now," said [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park).

A trust company specializes in being a trustee of various kinds of trusts and managing estates.

[HF1441*/SF792/CH12](#)

— M. COOK

Closed wood plant maintenance

Ainsworth Lumber Co. recently announced that it is indefinitely suspending operations at its Grand Rapids facility.

Instead of letting the oriented strand board facility fall into disrepair, some would like to see the plant maintained for at least two years in hopes that another business would purchase and operate the facility.

A bill to require that was approved April 2 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. [HF2385](#) now awaits action by the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

"This is an attempt to do what we have done in the taconite industry, and we are attempting to do with the Ford plant (in St. Paul), to at least make sure that if they do suspend operations permanently, that we're able to have that plant in working condition," said [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), the bill's sponsor. He said the plant employed 130 people.

Representing the company, Kevin Walli said the plant has "some competitive disadvantages" because of its press conditions.

"The company does intend to secure and maintain the mill in its current condition, so for that reason we are on a path to do very much what is required in this act," he said. "We are continuing to look for opportunities to reopen the plant, and our hope would be that we could do it yet this year."

A companion bill, [SF2186](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— M. COOK

ENVIRONMENT

Recycling e-waste

A bill that aims to solve the state's e-waste problem by establishing a system to recycle old TVs and other unwanted electronics devices is on a fast track to the House floor.

[HF854](#), sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), would force consumer

electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle an amount of devices proportional to the weight sold during the previous year. The House Finance Committee approved the bill April 12 and sent it to the House Taxes Committee. From there, it is expected to go to the House Ways and Means Committee and then to the House floor.

[Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), House Finance Committee chairman, said the bill is being "fast-tracked," with the goal of presenting it to Gov. Tim Pawlenty for signature before Earth Day, April 22.

Since July 2006, it has been illegal to discard TVs and other video display devices into the normal municipal solid waste stream. The devices, which often contain lead, cadmium and other pollutants, must be recycled.

Unfortunately, Sailer said, the state failed to provide people with a reasonable way to recycle them. As a result, the problem has been left for county and local governments to deal with, resulting in illegal dumping, high recycling fees and increased property taxes, in some cases.

The bill would force manufacturers to collect an amount of devices equal to 80 percent of the weight of products sold during the previous year — except for the first year, in which the requirement would be 60 percent. Devices collected outside the Twin Cities metro area would count for 1.5 times their actual weight.

In addition, manufacturers would have to pay a base fee of \$2,500 per year (\$5,000 in the first year), plus a variable fee ranging from 30 cents to 50 cents per pound of product for each pound they fall short of their target.

Sailer said the goal of the legislation is to address the problem, but "keep government intervention at a minimum."

[Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) spoke vehemently against the bill, calling it a "manufacturer's punishment bill" and a "convoluted plan to build bureaucracy" at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, which would help administer the program.

A companion bill, [SF235](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. BUSSE

GAME & FISH

Game and fish bill

Cock pheasant bag limits, smokeless gunpowder, night vision goggles, crossbow hunting and nonresident hunting fees are

just a few of the topics covered in the 2007 omnibus game and fish bill, approved March 29 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), the bill ([HF1116](#)) represents the work of the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division, which Dill chairs. It is now headed for the House Finance Committee.

Under the bill's provisions, modifications would be made to the state's hunting and fishing laws, including:

- increasing the pheasant hunting bag limit to three cock pheasants per day after the 16th day of the pheasant season;
- repealing a prohibition on the use of smokeless gunpowder during the state's muzzle-loader hunting season;
- banning the use of night vision goggles while hunting;
- establishing a crossbow deer hunting season and creating a crossbow deer hunting license;
- allowing the use of remote-controlled animal noise callers for hunting foxes and coyotes;
- creating an apprentice hunter validation that would allow individuals who do not possess a firearms safety certificate to hunt small game and deer if accompanied by an adult with a valid hunting license;
- directing the Department of Natural Resources to develop a program to encourage private landowners to make their land available for public hunting and fishing use;
- eliminating the reciprocal nonresident deer archery license fee and lowering nonresident deer hunting fees for individuals between 12 and 18 years of age;
- eliminating a ban on transporting raccoon, beaver and rabbit meat out of state; and
- exempting military personnel and veterans from the range and shooting exercise portion of the state's firearm safety certification requirements.

Dill said the bill had been put together in a bipartisan fashion, with an equal number of amendments coming from Democrats and Republicans.

"In terms of the bill, it's pretty balanced between the two sides of the aisle," he said.

A companion, [SF1184](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

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

AMENDMENT SEARCH

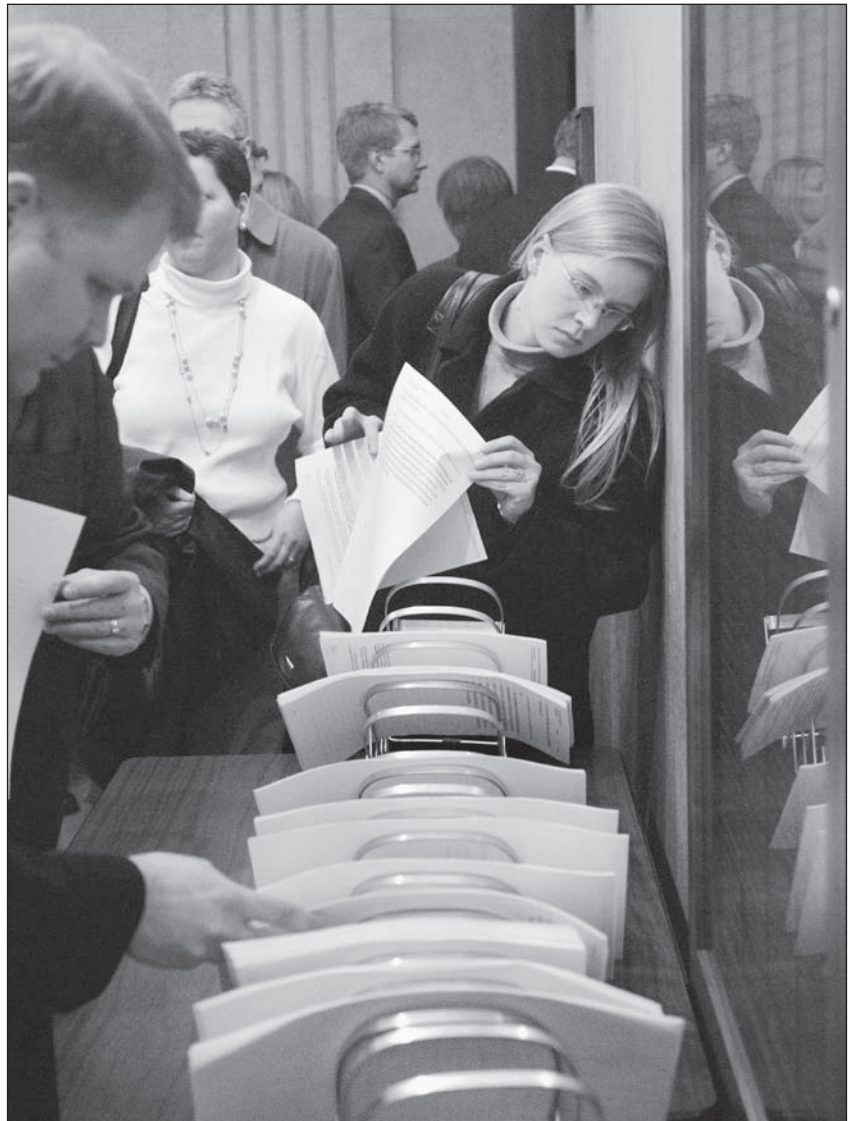


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Lobbyists and spectators scramble for copies of amendments to the various omnibus bills being heard in the House Finance Committee April 10.

GOVERNMENT

Duluth retiree benefits

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law that attempts to curb the impending \$300 million health care liability for retired Duluth city employees was signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), the law allows the Public Employees Retirement Association to establish an irrevocable fund for the city to help pay for post-employment benefits promised to retirees. The city of Duluth investment committee will serve as the trustee of the fund.

Under the bill, the Minnesota State Board of Investment could also invest money from the city's community investment fund to help with debt service payments for the city's street improvement program.

In 1983, the state auditor told Duluth city officials to be more thorough in their accounting practices after learning employees were retiring with large amounts of sick leave time. Negotiations with unions resulted in free health care for retirees in exchange for giving up the sick leave, Huntley said in a previous committee.

"Unfortunately the city never set aside any money to pay for that." The change will reduce the liability to about \$150 million, he said.

The bill comes on the heels of a Jan. 22 report issued by the Office of the Legislative

Auditor that expressed serious concerns with post-employment benefits by local jurisdictions that are not adequately funded.

Concerns were raised by several legislators that the legislature is setting a precedent by intervening in the jurisdiction's funding issues. The new law states, "Nothing in sections 1 and 2 may be interpreted as establishing a precedent for potential solutions to postemployment benefit expenditure and funding problems in other jurisdictions..."

The law is effective the day following local approval.

[HF163/SF60*/CH14](#)

— P. OSTBERG

State government spending

Not much changed for state government agencies' budgets as the House State Government Finance Division's omnibus finance bill made its way through the House Finance Committee April 11. It was scheduled to be heard in the House Taxes Committee April 12.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF953/SF1997*](#) would appropriate total net General Fund spending of \$544.5 million, compared to the governor's recommendation of \$646.7 million. The bill assumes \$104 million in revenue gains from technology carry-forward funds, the governor's and House tax compliance initiatives and audit fees. Much of the money would go to support the initial staffing and general costs associated with state agencies. The Senate approved the bill 42-20 March 24.

Also included in the bill are policy changes regarding elections. These would include automatic voter registration when applying for a driver's license; allowing for lease agreements to be used as forms of identification for Election Day registration; providing voter registration and active status information on the Office of the Secretary of State Web site; and allowing for ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter.

New commissions would be created, including the Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. According to the bill, the heritage office would "assist state government to foster an understanding and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity in Minnesota."

The House and Senate would be required to adopt rules requiring committees of the same jurisdictions to meet at coordinating times, and a regular hour of convening daily sessions in both houses. Also under the bill, the parking in front of the Capitol would be reserved for the public. Currently the area is reserved for Senate members and some staff during session.

Under the House plan, the governor would be required to reduce the number of state commissioners to save more than \$8 million over the next two biennia. The governor would also be "encouraged to submit" a State of the State address in January of each odd-numbered year and announce any major policy initiatives.

An amendment, offered unsuccessfully by [Rep. Bruce Anderson](#) (R-Buffalo Township), would have removed a provision that would give domestic partners health benefits.

Supporting the amendment, House Minority Leader [Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) said adding the provision equates to a "poison pill" and would result in a gubernatorial veto of the entire bill.

[Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) said giving benefits to domestic partners results in equal rights for all Minnesotans.

— P. OSTBERG

Meeker County EDA expands

Signed
by
the
governor

The Meeker County Economic Development Agency was established in 1998 by a special law. A general law authorizing county EDAs was passed in 2000, and the authority to have a nine-member county EDA was passed in 2005.

Since the Meeker County EDA was established under a different statute, a special law was needed to allow for a nine-member board. This new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 30, gives the county the needed authorization to expand its EDA.

Sponsored by [Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City) and [Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel), the law takes effect the day after local compliance.

[HF1429/SF1332*/CH15](#)

— C. GREEN

Revisor's bill becomes law

Signed
by
the
governor

The yearly version of what is commonly known as the Revisor's Bill was signed into law by Gov. Tim Pawlenty March 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law corrects errors, ambiguities, omissions, obsolete references and any other technical changes that need to be made to [Minnesota Statutes](#).

According to Michele Timmons, the revisor of statutes, during the interim between sessions, substantial editing and proofreading is done to the Session Laws and Minnesota Statutes. These changes, together with requests for additional changes from other state agencies, make up the bill.

A similar bill containing corrections for

bills passed during the current session is expected to come forward toward the end of session.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1200*/SF983/CH13](#)

— C. GREEN

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A tribute to two former legislators

Signed
by
the
governor

Rural regions say they often struggle to retain emergency medical staff for a variety of reasons, including the fact that members must volunteer.

Former legislators Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples) and Rep. Roger Cooper (DFL-Bird Island) understood this and were instrumental in passing legislation that removed barriers and offered incentives to those willing to provide the civic service.

On March 30, Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed into law an homage to these two men by renaming an incentive program for emergency service personnel in their honor.

The Ambulance Service Personnel Longevity Award and Incentive Program was passed in 1993 to offer payment to emergency response volunteers who "retired" from service after at least five years.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, it will be known as the Cooper/Sams Volunteer Ambulance Program.

"We just feel this would be a fitting tribute to them to memorialize their efforts," said O. J. Doyle, legislative consultant for the Minnesota Ambulance Association.

He and the law's sponsor, [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), said Cooper and Sams invested great energy to seeing the incentive program through the Legislature. The Senate sponsor is [Senate President James Metzen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul).

The timing is especially poignant, as Sams, who served in the Senate for 16 years, passed away March 5, 2007, at age 54 after a long battle with brain cancer. Cooper, 63, a House member from 1987-96, is undergoing treatment for thyroid cancer.

[HF736/SF636*/CH11](#)

— M. SIMPSON

More review for new hospitals

The House floor may be the next stage for debate of [HF1078](#), after it was given approval by the House Finance Committee April 10.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), the bill would change review requirements for new hospital sites.

In 1984, the Legislature placed a moratorium on construction of new hospitals, forcing state

authorization before building could begin. Two years ago, the state asked hospitals to submit public interest reviews to the Department of Health to aid the approval process.

The bill would add more to the review process, such as an assessment of how adding a new site would affect hospital employees at the current site. Hospitals would also be required to submit a report following completion of construction comparing the outcome to the original plan.

A controversial provision deleted from the bill would have allowed the state to withhold licensure from hospitals that strayed too far from the review plan. Huntley said this stipulation could have hurt development of a new hospital in Maple Grove — North Memorial Hospital — because investors worried that work there might be compromised. New language would require additional reporting, but removes the threat of a penalty.

The legislation would also require the commissioner of health to complete an annual report on hospitals' charity care and underpayment of services resulting from state health care plans.

[Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsors the companion bill, [SF967](#), which awaits action by the full Senate.

— M. SIMPSON

Smoking ban progression

A plan to expand a smoking prohibition to restaurants, bars and places of employment continues to puff along.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), [HF305/SF238](#)* was approved April 2 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division and awaits action in the House Finance Division.

The division inserted the House language into the Senate file, which was approved 41-24 by that body March 27.

Under the bill, smoking would be prohibited in public places, at public meetings, on public transportation and at places of employment. However, local governments would be permitted to issue a smoking license to a bar, upon request, if at least 50 percent of establishment sales come from alcoholic sales, or it has a section, that along with other provisions, would need to be separated from a restaurant area by continuous floor-to-ceiling walls and have a ventilation system separate from the restaurant's.

The bill was successfully amended by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) so that workers who lose their job because of the proposed ban would be eligible for the [Dislocated Worker Program](#), which offers free assistance in areas

such as career planning and counseling, job-related training and job search and placement skills.

Defeated on a voice vote was an amendment offered by [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls), which would have permitted the governing body of border cities to permit smoking in bars and private clubs if the neighboring city in another state permits the same.

A lot of times they are literally one community separated by a border or a river, Nornes said.

[Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) said the amendment would not be fair to all Minnesota cities. For example, he said, it would permit smoking in Hastings, Minn. because Prescott, Wis., across the Mississippi River, allows smoking. "The folks in Rosemount then say, 'Hey now we're at a disadvantage to those folks in Hastings.' ... If you're not going to do it for all you can't do it for one."

— M. COOK

HIGHER EDUCATION

Omnibus bill continues forward

Although the House Finance Committee approved the omnibus higher education and work force development finance bill April 12, there's still concern that even if it passes on the House floor, it may not make it past Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto pen.

[HF797](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), includes the "Dream Act," which would give in-state college tuition to undocumented immigrants living in Minnesota who have attended a Minnesota high school for at least three years.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), who offered an amendment to delete this provision, said that not only is the proposed statute unnecessary, it violates federal law and is an affront to those who have waited to become citizens as prescribed by current law. "The bill is a slap in the face to those who have gone through the legal process," he said.

The larger issue, said [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), is the federal government's intrusion into what should be a state decision. He said the provision, which has been passed by 11 other states, would allow more young people to continue their pursuit of education and in turn become a tremendous asset for Minnesota. Severson's amendment was defeated.

Other details of the omnibus bill include more than \$67 million to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the University of Minnesota to help reduce tuition rates; \$24 million for the research partnership between the university and the Mayo Clinic; \$36.5 million in higher education technology

improvements; and \$45 million in incentives for the bioscience industry.

After it was approved, language from [HF797](#) was inserted into the Senate omnibus bill, [SF1989](#). Sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), it was passed 64-2 by the Senate March 22 and was scheduled to be heard by the House Taxes Committee April 13.

— C. GREEN

HOUSING

Predatory lending prevention

Homeowners could be better protected from unscrupulous and predatory mortgage lending practices, under a bill that supporters call a balance between consumer protection and a robust lending market.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1004](#) was approved 124-9 by the House March 29. The bill now awaits action by the full Senate. [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the Senate sponsor.

"This establishes common sense standards for Minnesota consumers regarding underwriting and marketing of home loans," Davnie said. "It clarifies that home loans should be based on a borrower's ability to pay, and that borrowers should be given the information necessary to understand the loan. It aligns the interest of the mortgage broker with the borrower and assures the broker clear, objective standards."

According to the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#), predatory lenders, in part, sell properties for more than they are worth using false appraisals; encourage borrowers to lie about their income, expenses or cash available for down payments in order to get a loan; knowingly lend more money than a borrower can afford to repay; charge fees for unnecessary or nonexistent products and services; charge high interest rates to borrowers based on their race or national origin and not on their credit history; and strip homeowners' equity by convincing them to refinance when there is no benefit to the borrower.

The bill would define how a lender is to verify a borrower's ability to repay the loan; would require a mortgage broker to inform the borrower of not only the monthly payment on a first-lien mortgage loan, but also the monthly property taxes and insurance; and would prohibit "churning," or repeated refinancing that does not benefit the borrower considering all the circumstances.

"We want to make sure that when loans are marketed to consumers, they are fully aware of all the aspects of the loan," said Davnie.

— M. COOK

FLYING SEND-OFF



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Blackhawk combat helicopters of the St. Paul-based 2nd Battalion, 147th Assault Helicopter Battalion fly west to east between the State Office Building, left, and the Capitol April 12 as a tribute to their Minnesota family and friends. The battalion was ordered April 10 to active duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

INSURANCE

Hospitals vs. health plans

One culprit for the rising cost of health care, according to insurers, is medical imaging — specifically, high-tech diagnostic tests, such as magnetic resonance imaging, positron emission tomography scans and computed tomography scans.

In an attempt to curb unnecessary use of these technologies, Minnesota insurance companies have imposed regulations requiring physicians to first consult with a health-plan representative before prescribing the tests. Noncompliance means insurers won't pay, though they emphasize that no doctor is denied payment so long as they call first.

"This is the hottest issue for doctors in the state," said Robert Meiches, chief executive officer for the Minnesota Medical Association.

Meiches advocated a moratorium on the programs to members of the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division March 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), the division chairman, [HF2003](#) would prohibit the notification provision

until December 2008, while appointing a committee to study the issue. The legislation was offered as an amendment to [HF297](#), the division's omnibus bill, also sponsored by Huntley. Members split the amendment in two, with only the study receiving approval.

The bill's companion, [SF1752](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

"The question is: are we really getting better patient safety, better patient care and are we really cutting costs through these programs?" said [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka).

Insurers answered yes.

Charles Fazio, senior vice president and medical officer for Medica, said his company has decreased overall utilization, and saved \$15 million in health care costs since implementing its program in January 2007.

He said 10 to 20 percent of these procedures aren't medically necessary and cause patients to be needlessly exposed to high levels of radiation, in some cases.

Physicians complained that the authorization process was cumbersome, and forced them to assume additional staff and waste precious time.

"The issue is the amount of time we're

diverting to the process," said Terry Clark, a physician with Duluth's SMDC Health System, who said he's committed two full-time clerks and nurse time to seeking approvals.

Fazio said average "talk time" was six minutes.

— M. SIMPSON

Rental vehicle coverage extension

Under current law, a rental vehicle is covered by the liability portion of your motor vehicle insurance policy for one month.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kate Knuth](#) (DFL-New Brighton), [HF1022](#) would extend that to two months.

Approved 97-36 by the House March 29, the bill now awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee. [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji) is the Senate sponsor.

Knuth said the initiative came to her from a snowbird.

"He goes to Arizona every year and rents a car for two or three months, and because of circumstances, found out one year that if he was renting the car for more than 30 days his insurance coverage in Minnesota does not actually cover his rental, and he was basically driving around without insurance," she said.

The idea is to simply reduce the hassle factor, and to make sure people don't get caught without insurance on rental vehicles, said Knuth, adding that costs to policyholders would be "miniscule."

Bob Johnson, president of the Insurance Federation of Minnesota, told a House division that this extension "isn't the issue that's going to drive systems and premiums in Minnesota."

The bill would also require consumers to be notified of the two-month limit at the time of rental.

"I'm really glad you brought this to us because it takes care of us older people when we get down South," joked [Rep. Bob Gunther](#) (R-Fairmont).

— M. COOK

MILITARY

Guard reintegration programs

Several finance division omnibus bills were realigned this week in an effort to line up accounts with corresponding finance bills already passed by the Senate. Funding for the Department of Military Affairs is an example of the procedural change.

Bills relating to the department had been included in the House State Government Finance Division omnibus bill; however, the House Finance Committee April 10 amended the \$41.9 million in biennial appropriations

onto [HF2227](#), the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division omnibus bill. Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), it was scheduled to be heard April 13 by the House Ways and Means Committee.

The companion, [SF1925](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy) passed the Senate 66-0 March 22 and was tabled.

With more than 2,500 Minnesotans deployed overseas and expected to return en masse in August, the bill would allot \$1.5 million in the first year of the biennium for National Guard reintegration. This includes a program under the "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" banner called Family Reintegration Academies. These events are held at various locations across the state, drawing families of those who are deployed and providing them with information and "insight to ease the difficulties of reintegration," according to the Minnesota National Guard Web site.

Biennial funding also included in the bill:

- \$20.4 million for a National Guard education assistance program and other enlistment incentives;
- \$14.9 million for maintenance of training facilities and armories, air base operations and repair of buildings; and
- \$560,000 for additional staffing.

The bill also calls for National Guard members who are activated as honor guards

at funerals to be paid at the regular activation rate.

In an effort to boost morale, the bill would also permit the adjutant general to establish a fund and board to create and operate recreation facilities and activities at Camp Ripley and other National Guard facilities. The bill specifies, however, that no General Fund money or other state funds would be used for the purpose.

Starbase Minnesota is a program targeted to inner-city students and supported by the Minnesota National Guard that provides a hands-on approach to aerospace technology. The bill would provide \$150,000, in the first year of the biennium for predesign and design of a new facility at Camp Ripley for the Starbase program.

— L. SCHUTZ

TAXES

Tax break for Mall of America

A new garage planned at the Mall of America would cost \$22,000 per parking space, if building plans follow through in current form.

With 8,000 parking spaces, the \$181 million garage would be funded through state bonds, if [HF2237](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), becomes law.

"I've never even owned a car that expensive, let alone a parking space," said [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls).

The bill was laid over April 11 for possible omnibus bill inclusion by the House Taxes Committee. The measure was included in the Senate omnibus tax bill and passed 38-28 on March 30.

[Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) asked mall officials if parking fees had been discussed for the proposed garage.

"At the Capitol, I pay for the ramp because I use it," he said. "Why wouldn't that be a part of the conversation?"

Bill Griffith, an attorney speaking on behalf of the mall, said the megamall can't support a parking fee because people would look for free or reduced fee parking elsewhere.

"If it was that simple, we wouldn't be before you today," he said.

The hearing was the first time the committee discussed the plans for building Phase II at the Mall of America. The plan includes the new parking garage and hotels. In addition to using state bonds, the mall is asking for \$53.2 million in sales tax exemptions on construction materials and costs over several years, as well as a tax increment financing extension from the city of Bloomington.

Taxes Committee Chairwoman [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington) said there



PHOTO BY LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Don Pfeffer, director of the Department of Veterans Affairs Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program, speaks with the wife of a deployed National Guard member during a guard-sponsored Family Reintegration Academy held in Duluth. The events, held across the state, draw families of those who are deployed, and provides information about programs available to them and returning military members.

has been confusion on how the existing portion of the mall was funded.

"The state did not build the mall," she said. "Bloomington residents, Hennepin County residents and private investors built the mall."

Mall and city officials defended the tax breaks as something that would stimulate higher tax revenues for the state and Bloomington as the expansion would likely attract more tourists and shoppers. They said Phase I of the project produced state tax revenues of \$476 million from 1992 through 2006.

Griffith said he worked with the city of Bloomington for two years doing public infrastructure studies. The sales tax exemption includes related improvements within the TIF district and may include materials for roads and other infrastructure improvements. The TIF district, set to expire in 2018, would be extended until 2025.

"No project can be successful without investment in public infrastructure," he said.

— S. HEGMAN

Exemption for publishing company

An Eagan publishing company could see a sales tax exemption on an expansion project if the state agrees to help.

[HF1138](#) would give Thomson West, a legal information solutions company in Eagan, the exemption for a possible expansion. Sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan), the expansion would include two data centers and an office building that could house 2,000 employees by 2012. The exemption is not long term and would save the company \$9 million over four years, transferring the costs to the state's General Fund. The exemption is contingent on the business spending at least \$60 million on the project. But once completed, the expansion would increase the company's tax base.

The bill would provide a sales tax exemption for materials and supplies used and equipment incorporated into construction, renovation and expansion. The exemption would apply to everything from equipment and furniture to software and telecommunications equipment. If approved, the exemption would be effective for purchases after Dec. 31, 2006, and before Jan. 1, 2012.

But a sales tax exemption isn't the only thing in the works for Thomson West. [HF2129](#), sponsored by [Rep. Lynn Wardlow](#) (R-Eagan), would authorize the city of Eagan to create one or more economic development tax increment financing districts for the expansion. Both bills were held over for possible omnibus bill inclusion by the House Taxes Committee April 11.

According to the nonpartisan House

AIRING SUPPORT



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Hundreds of transportation workers hold signs and listen to legislators on the Capitol mall during a rally for transportation funding April 12.

Research Department, increments would be calculated using the current tax rates, not the tax rates in effect when the district was certified under general law.

The Eagan City Council unanimously approved a resolution in March supporting a tax increment financing district for the business. The city council agreed that the availability of tax increment assistance might be necessary to persuade the company to proceed with the project in Eagan rather than build in a different state.

"This is not just an Eagan bill, it's a state of Minnesota bill," said Eagan Mayor Mike Maguire.

He added that the business attracts income from around the world.

Companion bills, [SF897](#) and [SF1843](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), were included in the Senate omnibus tax bill that passed 38-28 March 30.

— S. HEGMAN



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

More for Mother Nature

Bill would increase funding for clean water, renewable energy

Funding for Clean Water Legacy Act programs, aimed at improving the quality of the state's surface waters, would get a boost in the environment, natural resources and energy omnibus finance bill.

By NICK BUSSE

"Clean up our waters" is how [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) describes the overall theme of this year's environment finance bill. But there's more to it than that — everything from hydrogen power and ethanol to invasive species and off-road vehicle trails.

In fact, the bill is a kind of environmental super-bill, combining the omnibus environment finance bill ([HF1651](#)), sponsored by Wagenius; the omnibus energy finance bill ([HF1392](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson); and the omnibus wetlands and watersheds bill ([HF577](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul).

On April 10, the House Finance Committee incorporated the language of all three bills into [HF2410/SF2096*](#), the environment, natural resources and energy omnibus finance bill. Sponsored by Wagenius and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill was passed 61-2 by the Senate March 27. It was approved as amended April 10 by the House Finance Committee and April 11 by the House Taxes Committee, and now awaits action by the

House Ways and Means Committee.

The bill contains approximately \$761 million in environment and natural resources spending and \$47 million in energy-related spending, with a focus on repairing impaired waters and developing renewable power, respectively. Altogether, it proposes approximately \$27 million more in spending than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's budget recommendations.

[Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), House

Finance Committee chairman, explained that the bills were being combined to match up with the Senate, which chose to put its environment and energy funding into a single bill. He said it would make it easier for a conference committee to iron out differences between the House and Senate versions.

Some Republicans on the committee objected to the procedure, including [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria), who expressed concern

that “cobbling” together bills with different subjects was in violation of the Minnesota Constitution.

[Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by deleting everything but the governor’s recommendations.

Environment

Environment and natural resources spending in the state would get a \$107.6 million boost — a 16.5 percent increase over current funding levels.

The largest chunk of the spending for the biennium would go toward cleaning up impaired waters under the provisions of the Clean Water Legacy Act, with \$30.6 million in General Fund money going to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to conduct assessments of surface water quality. Additionally, the Department of Natural Resources would receive an extra \$5.6 million and the Board of Water and Soil Resources an extra \$10.9 million to help implement Clean Water Legacy Act programs.

“During the course of the hearings that we’ve had over the past several months, we heard some priorities from folks, and I think it’s fair to say the first priority was ‘clean up our waters,’” Wagenius said.

Various programs to combat the spread of invasive species would get a boost from the bill, including \$3.2 million in new funding for the DNR’s aquatic invasive species control program and \$150,000 to fight shade tree pests and diseases. Additionally, it would require the DNR to develop a plan to prevent Asian carp from spreading into state waters, implement a pilot program to stop the spread of zebra mussels, and establish a dedicated invasive species account in which revenues from the state’s watercraft license surcharges would be deposited.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources would also receive a large portion of the new money, with a \$14.7 million increase, bringing the board’s total state funding to \$45.1 million for the biennium. The money would be used for a variety of purposes, including improvements to drainage ditches and weed management programs.

The board would also be given greater oversight powers and responsibilities, under language that was drafted partially in response to an Office of the Legislative Auditor [report](#)

critical of the board’s oversight practices. The board would be required to evaluate the performance and finances of local water management entities on a regular basis and take “corrective actions,” including withholding grant money and other funds, when necessary.

Parks and trails would see a funding increase in the bill in the form of a \$1.5 million increase to the Metropolitan Council for metropolitan parks and a \$1.5 million appropriation to the DNR for state trails and parks.

Also included in the bill is a program that would allow deer hunters to donate venison to food assistance programs at no charge. The program would allow the Department of Agriculture to provide a \$70 reimbursement to meat processors who process deer for charitable food organizations. A \$1

surcharge on all deer hunting licenses would be instituted to pay for the program.

One of the bill’s more controversial provisions would ban the use and development of off-road vehicle trails on DNR-administered lands in Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties — where all the current trails happen to be located. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) tried unsuccessfully to remove the provision.

Other highlights include:

- a provision that would restrict the release of genetically modified wild rice in the state;
- funding for the Department of Health to analyze water treatments to reduce potentially harmful chemicals from the drinking water supply in the east metro area;
- funding to test 20 surface water sites around the state for the presence of endocrine disruptors; and
- provisions clarifying the state’s requirements for replacing wetlands.

Energy

The bill would provide for a host of new investments in renewable and alternative energy sources like wind, solar, hydrogen and biofuels. It accounts for a sizeable chunk of the governor’s “Next Generation Energy Initiative.”

The “E85 Everywhere” initiative, which aims to expand the number of ethanol fueling stations in the state by way of a cost-sharing grant program, would receive

\$8 million — \$4 million less than the governor’s recommendation.


Hydrogen power would get a significant boost from the bill in the form of a \$10 million competitive grant program. The commerce department would be directed to create a vision, goals, timeline and strategies for deploying hydrogen power in Minnesota, and then implement the program accordingly.

Wind power, key to meeting the state’s newly adopted renewable energy standard, would get a helping hand in the form of a \$2 million rural wind energy development assistance program and also a \$3.25 million revolving loan program.

Research initiatives also figure prominently in the bill. Xcel Energy would be directed to transfer \$5 million to the Department of Commerce to fund a competitive grant program for renewable energy research projects. Xcel would also have to transfer an additional \$5 million to the department for a number of other programs, including a \$1 million “technical analysis and demonstration” project focusing on plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

Also included in the bill is a \$3 million grant in fiscal year 2009 to the University of Minnesota’s Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment for various renewable energy research projects. Another \$10 million would be appropriated over fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Other energy-related highlights include:

- a program that would give cash bonuses to state employees who make energy-efficiency suggestions that save the state money;
- \$4 million for preliminary engineering, permitting and development of a steam-producing power plant in St. Paul, to be used to power the Rock-Tenn recycling facility;
- \$500,000 in rebates for solar electricity projects; and
- \$60,000 for a feasibility study on hydroelectric generation at the Rapidan Dam in Blue Earth County. 

Where to find information

House Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

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

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Finding a home for the homeless

One-time funding raises concern for future of some programs

By MIA SIMPSON

At first it seemed there were no losers in [HF2241](#). Every bill laid over for possible omnibus inclusion by the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division had been included in the final bill, which was approved by the division March 30 and the House Finance Committee April 11.

The legislation, sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), division chairwoman, gave a slight bump in biennial General Fund spending over the governor's proposal, for a total appropriation of \$556 million. There is no Senate companion.

But, as they say, the devil is in the details. During the division hearing, advocate after advocate rose to thank the committee for

its generosity, but said they were dismayed by the funding source being proposed: one-time monies taken from the federal welfare program, called TANF or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

"We need you to go to leadership and demand real money for this committee," said Michael Dahl, executive director of Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. "You need to do something to

get rid of these one-time TANF funds."

In all, \$31 million would be drawn from TANF funding for housing and family home-visiting programs the next biennium. It was a move Clark said she regretted and would work to rectify, both in conference committee later this session and in two years when funding would run dry.

"In many ways I agree with you on the issue of the TANF funding; that was not our choice," Clark said. "I do believe that you and I, if we're back here in those years 2010 and 2011, that we'll do the right thing. That's what I have to count on."

Housing

The money issue drove to the heart of much of the division's work — housing. Initiatives

Health & Housing continued on page 22



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

In response to several accidents where children have fallen through window screens, an amendment was successfully attached to the omnibus housing and public health finance bill that would force window safety standards into state building codes.

A first step toward change

Improvement for health care, nursing homes and the poor

By MIA SIMPSON

Friday, March 30, on the ground floor of the State Office Building, a large crowd surrounded the entrance to room 10. Inside, lobbyists and advocates searched for seating and buzzed about the work to come. It was the final hearing of House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division for its omnibus finance bill, [HF297](#), sponsored by the division chairman, [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth).

Earlier in the session, representatives from nursing homes, hospitals, low-income families, mental health and health care had pushed hard for big proposals, many at costs of hundreds of millions of dollars.

“When we think about these issues — long-term care to general health care to welfare — the stakes are high,” [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) said. “I’ve learned a lot throughout this process.”

Approved by members and sent to the House Finance Committee, the bill provided some help. It included a priority of the DFL caucus, [HF1](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), a measure that seeks to incrementally provide health insurance to all children. The bill would also restore some funding for those affected by state cuts in 2003 and 2005, when the Legislature wrestled with budget deficits. The companion, [SF2](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), passed the Senate 42-23 on March 29.

As discussion closed over the \$11 billion proposal, Republican and DFL members differed over the means used to address the division’s issues — but not the goal, which is to build systems of better care and accountability.

“Moving from last year’s to this year’s committee, there’s certainly a big change in direction,” [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood) said. “But we want to approach much of this on a bipartisan basis.”

Health Care

The buzz word about health care this session was “reform,” and HF297 would begin

the long trek to that end. It proposes a variety of pilot projects, task forces and studies, most with one-time money, to encourage innovation and search for answers to the state’s health care issues. These include:

- a project for community collaboratives that would help provide support to people without health care;
- a payment reform plan for medical assistance recipients receiving care for chronic conditions;
- pilot programs for state employees and enrollees of state health care programs that focus on medical homes, care coordination and treatment incentives;
- studies on universal coverage, medical imaging and uncompensated care; and
- two task forces, one charged with learning how to best improve affordability, quality and access — the three legs of the health care stool — and one to focus on a plan for covering all children in Minnesota, under HF1.

The Children’s Health Security Act, HF1, was funded in its entirety. The bill would pull children below 225 percent of federal poverty guidelines into MinnesotaCare by 2008 and those below 300 percent by 2011, at a cost of \$373 million by 2011, as well as establish the task force.

The bill also includes provisions from Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s health care initiatives, such as:

- “125 plans,” which would require certain employers to establish a system allowing employees to buy health insurance with pre-tax dollars;
- QCare, which sets quality care standards for diabetes, hospital care, preventative care and cardiac care for state employees and state health care recipients; and
- one-time funding for e-Health grants to help establish interoperable electronic health record systems in Greater Minnesota.

Nursing Homes

[Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault) said in an earlier interview that a 4 percent funding

boost to nursing homes across the board would be victory; HF297 would give them an increase of 3 percent, while providing more funding to specific, struggling nursing homes. It didn’t fund rebasing, which would have corrected funding inequalities between rural and urban nursing homes. It also proposes cost-neutral changes to patient care reimbursements, known as case mix indices, a move opposed by the industry.

Minnesota Family Investment Program

Discussion on behalf of low-income families centered mostly on two issues this year: the change in federal work requirements under the federal welfare program, called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; and cuts made by the state to MFIP in 2003. HF297 attempts to partially rectify both. It would repeal two penalties: the Supplemental Security Income penalty, which revokes \$125 from a family’s monthly MFIP grant if that family also receives federal SSI assistance; and the family cap, which denies additional cash assistance to families that bear children while on the MFIP program.

The bill also relaxes work requirements for parent participants, who would be waived from working 20 hours a week for 12 months, instead of the current 12 weeks, if they pursue more education. Recipients would also be required to give written permission to work for free under the legislation, and program exit levels were pushed from 115 percent to 140 percent of federal poverty guidelines.

Some legislators found these latter changes counter-intuitive, given new work performance standards passed by Congress in 2006. As part of the Deficit Reduction Act, the federal government limited acceptable work activities and imposed tougher work rate targets for TANF recipients. If Minnesota fails to meet the mark, it could be penalized tens of millions of dollars annually.

Republican members said that easing work requirements will make it tougher to meet federal demands. “This does not get us where we need to be,” [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) said. The bill does propose to move populations least likely to meet the targets, such as refugees, to state-sponsored programs, as promoted by the governor.

Health & Human continued on page 22

Closing the achievement gap

All-day kindergarten is part of \$13.9 billion budget proposal

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

The omnibus K-12 education finance bill has several new programs intended to close the achievement gap and keep Minnesota schools among the best in the nation, supporters say.

Although K-12 education spending makes up 39 percent of the state's budget, and the House proposal won't change that, the bill proposes a \$919 million increase in base funding to cover the cost of new programs, funnel resources to under-funded programs and for one-time grants.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) outlines \$13.9 billion in

spending for the next biennium, a 9.2 percent increase in the education budget over the previous biennium. Some new initiatives and increased funding could go toward voluntary all-day kindergarten, "21st century high schools" initiatives, world language programs, responsible family life and sexuality education programs and \$125 million in property tax relief.

Half of the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division's omnibus bill was incorporated into the omnibus K-12 education finance bill. The other portion will be incorporated into the omnibus health care and human services finance bill.

On April 11 the House Finance Committee approved the bill and referred it to the House Taxes Committee.

The Senate version, [SF2095](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), was approved 51-12 March 26 and then tabled.

Programs

A top priority this year for House Democrats is all-day kindergarten, and part of the bill would fund that with \$94.7 million in fiscal year 2009. Currently, Minnesota schools offer half-day kindergarten. If parents want their

K-12 continued on page 23



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Jenny Heyer, left, a kindergarten teacher at Island Lake Elementary School in Shoreview, listens as Brook Fahey reads her a story about birds as other students wait their turn on April 12.

Reality of reentry

Hold offenders accountable, but provide tools for success outside the cell

By CRAIG GREEN

When this year's session began, Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the House Public Safety Finance Division, set out to reevaluate the way the state deals with offenders after their release from incarceration.

"We owe it to society and to these offenders and their families to give them a second chance when they are released," Paymar said. "But you don't give them a chance by setting them up for failure. What we're trying to do is give them that second chance."

Having seen continuing efforts at the Legislature to incarcerate offenders for longer periods of time, Paymar wanted to find a way to hold offenders accountable for their actions, give them the needed tools to stay crime-free and save taxpayer dollars.

Sponsored by Paymar, [HF829](#), the omnibus public safety finance bill, includes provisions from several bills that would support reentry programs and initiatives. It was approved

by the division March 29. After stops in the House finance and taxes committees on April 9 and 10, the bill's next stop is the House Ways and Means Committee.

A Senate companion, [SF1992](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed 64-0 by the Senate March 23 and laid on the table.

Jobs, housing and treatment

Fred LeFleur, director of the Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections, said that 80 percent of offenders released are unemployed and have no trade or craft making it difficult for them to find jobs or affordable housing. "Many prisoners go into prison with no skills, so the expectation that this is going to happen after 36 to 48 months is unrealistic," LeFleur said. "We have to motivate people who aren't historically motivated to get educated."

The omnibus bill includes [HF1734](#), sponsored by [Rep. A. Willie Dominguez](#)

(DFL-Mpls), that would fund \$400,000 in the next biennium for a pilot project providing employment services to ex-criminal offenders in North Minneapolis, and [HF2267](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown), that would provide \$300,000 to the Arrowhead Regional Corrections agency to expand its productive day program. The omnibus bill also includes \$1.1 million to local government units participating in the [Minnesota Comprehensive Offender Reentry Plan](#) for reentry job-seeking services.

"A decent job is a means to keeping an offender from trying to find the easy buck," Paymar said. "An offender will be less likely to go into the old familiar territory of criminal behavior if they are working and contributing to society."

Another program hoping to receive funding is The NetWork. Chief Executive Officer Steve Nelson said that he and his staff work with high-risk adults — primarily black men — who have chronic problems with employment, housing, substance abuse and mental illness.

"An investment in this enterprise must be compared to the cost of maintaining the proven inefficiencies and limited effectiveness of fragmented systems dealing with only one aspect of [ex-offenders'] lives. The NetWork is designed to provide much better outcomes at a cost taxpayers can afford and support."

With 30 percent to 50 percent of all offenders suffering from mental illness, Paymar believes that these types of treatment programs are essential. "What's going to happen to them if they're not able to be treated for mental illness or a drug habit? They'll wind up homeless, dead under a bridge somewhere, or they'll be the people committing a lot of nuisance crimes in neighborhoods," Paymar said. "They're simply not given an opportunity."

This conviction, however, was not always shared by the members of the division. Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder) said, "One thing I'm getting tired of is being made



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TOM OLMSCHEID

The Public Safety Finance Division's omnibus bill provides for several programs to help offenders reenter society. Rep. Michael Paymar, the bill's sponsor, wants to find a way to hold offenders accountable for their actions, yet give them the needed tools to stay crime-free and save taxpayer dollars.

Public Safety continued on page 23

How a Bill Becomes

Idea

1 A bill is an idea for a new law or an idea to change an old law. Anyone can suggest an idea for a bill — an individual, consumer group, professional association, government agency, or the governor. Most often, however, ideas come from legislators, the only ones who can begin to move an idea through the process. There are 134 House members and 67 senators.

Legal form

2 The Office of the Revisor of Statutes and staff from other legislative offices work with legislators in putting the idea for a new law into proper legal form. The revisor's office is responsible for assuring that the proposal's form complies with the rules of both bodies before the bill can be introduced into the Minnesota House of Representatives and the Minnesota Senate.

Authors

3 Each bill must have a legislator to sponsor and introduce it in the Legislature. That legislator is the chief author whose name appears on the bill along with the bill's file number to identify it as it moves through the legislative process. There may be up to 34 co-authors from the House and four from the Senate. Their names also appear on the bill.

General Register

7 In the House, the General Register serves as a parking lot where bills await action by the full body. Bills chosen to appear on the Calendar for the Day or the Fiscal Calendar are drawn from the General Register.

In the Senate, a different procedure is used. Bills are listed on the General Orders agenda. Senate members, acting as the "committee of the whole," have a chance to debate the issue and offer amendments on the bill. Afterwards, they vote to recommend: passage of the bill, progress (delay action), or further committee action. And sometimes they recommend that a bill not pass. From here, the bill is placed on the Calendar.

Calendar for the Day

8 In the House, the Calendar for the Day is a list of bills the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee has designated for the full House to vote on. Members can vote to amend the bill, and after amendments are dispensed with, the bill is given its *third reading* before the vote of the full body is taken. The House also has a Fiscal Calendar, on which the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee or House Taxes Committee can call up for consideration any tax or finance bill that has had a second reading. The bills are debated, amended, and passed in one day.

In the Senate, bills approved by the "committee of the whole" are placed on the Calendar. At this point, the bill has its *third reading*, after which time the bill cannot be amended unless the entire body agrees to it. Toward the end of the session, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration designates bills from the General Orders calendar to receive priority consideration. These Special Orders bills are debated, amended, and passed in one day.

A bill needs 68 votes to pass the House and 34 votes to pass the Senate. If the House and Senate each pass the same version of the bill, it goes to the governor for a signature.



a Law in Minnesota

Introduction

4 The chief House author of the bill introduces it in the House; the chief Senate author introduces it in the Senate. Identical bills introduced in each body are called *companion* bills. The bill introduction is called the *first reading*. The presiding officer of the House then refers it to an appropriate House committee for discussion; the same thing happens in the Senate.

Committee

5 The bill is discussed in one or more committees depending upon the subject matter. After discussion, committee members recommend action — approval or disapproval — to the full House and full Senate. The House committee then sends a report to the House about its action on the bill; the Senate committee does likewise in the Senate.

Floor

6 After the full House or Senate accepts the committee report, the bill has its *second reading* and is placed on the House agenda called the General Register or the Senate agenda called General Orders. (A committee can recommend that non-controversial bills bypass the General Register or General Orders and go onto the Consent Calendar, where bills usually pass without debate.) After this point, House and Senate procedures differ slightly.

Conference

9 If the House and Senate versions of the bill are different, they go to a conference committee. In the House, the speaker appoints three or five representatives, and in the Senate, the Subcommittee on Committees of the Committee on Rules and Administration selects the same number of senators to form the committee. The committee meets to work out differences in the two bills and to reach a compromise.

Floor

10 The conference committee's compromise bill then goes back to the House and the Senate for another vote. If both bodies pass the bill in this form, it is sent to the governor for his or her approval or disapproval. (If one or both bodies reject the report, it goes back to the conference committee for further consideration.)

Governor

11 Once the governor has the bill, he or she may: sign it, and the bill becomes law; veto it within three days; or allow it to become law by not signing it. During session, the House and Senate can override a governor's veto. This requires a two-thirds vote in the House (90 votes) and Senate (45 votes). The governor also may "line-item veto" parts of a money bill, or "pocket veto" a bill passed during the last three days of the session by not signing it within 14 days after final adjournment. ▼



Tuesday, April 10

HF2399-Thissen (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Athletic trainers education, credentials, definitions and training provisions modified.

HF2400-Hilstrom (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Human services department vehicles exempted from tax and fees; sex offender programs and vulnerable adult definition modified; and penalties imposed for bringing contraband onto treatment facility property.

HF2401-Loeffler (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Public employees group long-term care insurance program eligibility expanded.

HF2402-Shimanski (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Term limits provided for state legislators, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2403-Liebling (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul to Rochester high-speed rail line feasibility study funding provided and bonds issued.

HF2404-Heidgerken (R)

Finance

Food shelves grants for milk purchases provided.

HF2405-Masin (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Instant runoff voting in federal, state, and local elections provided.

HF2406-Madore (DFL)

Finance

Transit improvement center grant program established.

HF2407-Demmer (R)

Finance

St. Paul to Rochester high-speed rail line feasibility study funding provided and bonds issued.

HF2408-Carlson (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Physically disabled persons multiple sets of license plates authorized.

HF2409-Brod (R)

Health & Human Services

Human services department vehicles exempted from tax and fees; sex offender programs and vulnerable adult definition modified; and penalties imposed for bringing contraband onto treatment facility property.

HF2410-Wagenius (DFL)

Finance

Environmental, natural resources and energy funding provided; programs established; accounts, assessments and fees provided.

HF2411-Brod (R)

Taxes

New Prague wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2412-Brod (R)

Taxes

Disaster area reconstructed home property tax value limited.

HF2413-Brod (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State Budget and Capital Reform Act of 2007 adopted proposing various changes to state finance; requiring performance measures in appropriations bills; creating a state building commission; and limiting authorizations for bonds.

HF2414-Johnson (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Telecommunications obsolete rules repealed.

HF2415-Hausman (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Amtrak funding support urged of Congress by resolution.

HF2416-Olson (R)

Finance

Unsubsidized providers of public transit service exempted from certain taxes; statewide use of freeway shoulders authorized for transit buses and metro mobility buses; and metropolitan bus stop use authorized.

HF2417-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Job opportunity building zone property tax exemption modified to exclude school operating referenda levies, and tax incentives limited for certain relocation businesses.

Wednesday, April 11

HF2418-Abeler (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Major league baseball stadium alternative location provided in the city of Ramsey.

HF2419-Anderson, B. (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Right to keep and bear arms for certain purposes provided as a fundamental right, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2420-Seifert (R)

Finance

MERIT Center in Marshall funding provided, bonds issued.

HF2421-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

State fairgrounds liquor sales provisions modified.

Thursday, April 12

No bills were introduced.

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Tracking new laws, vetoes

Once a bill passes the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the governor for consideration. The governor has several options when considering a bill:

- sign the bill and it will become law;
- veto the bill;
- line-item veto individual items within an appropriations bill; or
- do nothing, which can have two different effects. The timing of these actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In the first year of the biennium, the governor has three days from the time of presentment to veto a bill. If the governor doesn't sign the bill within this time frame,

it will become law with or without his signature. (Sundays are not counted in the three-day time limit, but holidays are.)

Only on appropriations bills can the governor exercise the line-item veto authority. This allows the governor to eliminate the appropriation items to which he or she objects. As with all vetoes (save pocket vetoes, which occur in the days after the Legislature has adjourned sine die), the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is three days after the governor receives the bill.

Policy items contained in appropriations bills may not be line-item vetoed. In order

to veto such an item, the governor is required to veto the entire bill.

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special session of the Legislature anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next session.

The governor's veto authority is outlined in the Minnesota Constitution (Article IV, Section 23).

Key: CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File; *=denotes bill language signed into law.

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|---|-----------|--------|
| 1 | 8* | 17 | Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006. | 1/30/2007 | |
| 2 | 110* | 38 | Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact enacted. | 2/20/2007 | |
| 3 | 4 | 4* | Renewable energy standard established. | 2/22/2007 | |
| 4 | 87* | 257 | St. Paul Asian Pacific Cultural Center predesign expenditures authorized. | 3/2/2007 | |
| 5 | 160* | 103 | Help America Vote Act account appropriations transfer authorized. | 3/14/2007 | |
| 6 | 935 | 736* | Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed Minnesota Inter-county Association. | 3/21/2007 | |
| 7 | 1425 | 1499* | Students authorized to participate in high school league-sponsored activities after completing licensed treatment programs. | 3/20/2007 | |
| 8 | 1008* | 985 | Child placement background check requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 9 | 1364 | 1168* | Building contractors insurance requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 10 | 1678 | 1294* | Public Utilities Commission electronic filing authorized. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 11 | 736* | 636 | Ambulance service personnel longevity award and incentive program renamed the Cooper/Sams volunteer ambulance program. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 12 | 1441* | 792 | Limited purpose trust companies nonsubstantive term changes provided. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 13 | 1200* | 983 | Revisor's bill. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 14 | 163 | 60* | Duluth postemployment benefits accounts authorized, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 15 | 1429 | 1332* | Meeker County economic development authority membership increased to nine. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 16 | 274* | 227 | Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |

*The legislative bill marked with an asterisk denotes the file submitted to the governor.

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Veterans continued from page 4

tax exemption for military retirement pay, including survivor's benefits pay. Under the bill, National Guard members would be provided with the same tax exemption for out-of-state training that is currently allowed for members of the military reserves. It also extends to the National Guard the income tax subtraction for

training performed out of state that is currently allowed for members of the military reserves, retroactive to tax year 2005. Sponsored by Vickerman, the companion [SF160](#), was laid over by the Senate Taxes Committee.

A bill ([HF162](#)) sponsored by Haws would fund a tuition assistance program at any Minnesota postsecondary institution for up to \$1,000 for veterans and spouses and children

of deceased veterans. This bill awaits action in the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. The companion, [SF253](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), passed the Senate 64-2 on March 22 as part of the Senate omnibus higher education bill, ([SF1989](#)) sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul). 

Health & Housing continued from page 14

on behalf of affordable housing, homelessness and foreclosure prevention would gain a total of \$123 million, one-fifth of the division's proposed biennial spending.

The bill would grant \$7 million the next biennium to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, an initiative of Clark's that passed in 2005 without appropriation.

Funding for facets of the continuum of care model — shelters, transitional and affordable housing — differ slightly from the governor's in fiscal years 2008-09, with proposed allocations to:

- Bridges, a program that provides rental subsidies for people with serious and persistent mental illness;
- the Housing Trust Fund, which provides rental assistance;
- the Homeownership Assistance Fund, which assists low-income first-time homebuyers;
- the Economic Development and Housing Challenge Fund, which helps rehabilitate and build low-income housing; and
- programs that help prevent foreclosures and long-term homelessness services and prevention.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#)

(DFL-Columbia Heights) — [HF595](#), a home-visiting program for low-income parents — received a second, \$10 million chunk, of TANF funding.

Health

On the issue of health, the bill focuses on studying known environmental toxins and tracking their effects.

It would fully fund [HF1621](#), sponsored by [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo), which would establish an environmental tracking system and a biomonitoring program to determine where toxins are concentrating and what affect they're having on people.

Lead abatement, an issue championed by Clark, would also receive an allocation. The language lowers the threshold for public intervention for pregnant women and children who've been poisoned by the metal and would grant funding to CLEARCorps, a program that assesses and cleans contaminated sites. Clark successfully offered an amendment that would force window safety standards into state building codes, originally [HF277](#).

The bill would also provide funding for an initiative of [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1206](#), for improved newborn hearing screening and support.


A multitude of studies on materials believed to be toxic to humans were included in the bill, including research on:

- Lindane, a chemical used in lice and scabies treatment;
- Bisphenol-A, which is used in many consumer products;
- Decabromodiphenyl Ether, a flame retardant; and
- radiation from Monticello and Prairie Island nuclear power plants.

The bill would also expand surveillance programs for birth defects and cancer. Those provisions have been problematic to Republican members, who worried about privacy issues and consent.

"It's important that parents have some control over the data collected on their kids," said [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti) said of the birth defects registry system.

Boards

Seventeen boards, including those for nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, psychology, social work and emergency medical service would receive funding, under the bill's provisions. The largest allocation — \$90 million — would go to the Veterans Home Board for operational costs, capital investments and compensation adjustments. 

Health & Human continued from page 15


Other inclusions

Other sectors that would receive funding allocations include:

- counties, who would receive a one-time \$40 million increase to help ease a fund-

ing blow from the federal level for case management work;

- people with disabilities, who would see more funding for waiver services, and their Medical Assistance asset limit doubled, at a cost of \$34 million in fiscal years 2008-09; and
- people suffering mental illnesses, with

provisions that included expanded coverage for mental health services in state health plans and grant funding. Both provisions appeared in bills from [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF196](#), and the governor. 

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

House Public Information Services

175 State Office Building296-2146
Committee Schedule Hotline.....296-9283

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol296-2314

House Index

211 Capitol296-6646

Senate Information

231 Capitol296-0504

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol296-2344

Voice mail/order bills.....296-2343

Senate Index

110 Capitol296-2887

Committee Hotline, Senate296-8088

children to attend all-day kindergarten, they are responsible for the cost.

Greiling would have preferred more in the funding target, "but this gets us in the right direction," she said.

"Research shows that all-day every-day kindergarten leads to higher academic achievement and reduced achievement gaps between students of different economic and racial groups," said Karen Kelley-Ariwoola, vice president of community philanthropy for the Minneapolis Foundation.

Twenty-nine states provide all-day kindergarten and, according to the foundation, only 31 percent of kindergarteners in Minnesota are enrolled in the program.

Along with all-day kindergarten, there is a push for increased academic rigor in schools. The House plan proposes nearly \$9 million in biennial funding for the "21st century high schools" initiative, which includes Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

courses and College in Schools.


The commissioner of education would employ a full-time world language coordinator to work with school districts in planning and developing world languages courses and programs.

Five \$50,000 world language grants could be awarded to interested schools in 2009. Three of the grants would go to K-eighth grade sites because Greiling said that children learn better at that age. The grants could be used for developing or enhancing a sustainable Mandarin Chinese program and for an indigenous American Indian program such as Dakota or Ojibwe.

Governor and House differ

The House plans \$159 million more in additional spending than Gov. Tim Pawlenty. There are other differences as well.

- The House would raise the amount a school district receives to educate gifted and talented students from \$9 to \$13 per pupil. The governor had no increase allotted.

- The governor proposes \$5.6 million to link the Q-Comp pay system to the basic funding formula, and the House doesn't.
- Gov. Tim Pawlenty's \$237 million high school initiatives were not a part of the House's proposal, which decided to balance their funding more through K-12.
- The House proposed special education spending is \$69.3 million more than the governor's proposal with the largest increase being on the base for special education.
- The House has \$3 million more in proposed spending for nutrition programs, most of it is for school lunch and food storage.
- The House would allot \$11 million in library funding, with spending increases for several programs and a one-time grant of \$4.5 million for a merger of the Hennepin County and Minneapolis library systems. The governor has no funding for the merger. 

Public Safety continued from page 17

to feel guilty, as a citizen, for other people's problems. We get told that it's our fault because people go to prison, and we get told that it's our fault that they get out of prison and they're not brought up to speed." At some point, they have to pull themselves up and take responsibility for their situation, Cornish said.

Family conflicts

According to a 2002 study, 33 percent of all federal inmates admitted to physically assaulting their intimate partner during the year prior to their incarceration.


Marcus Pope, associate director of the

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, said that because domestic violence is so prevalent in the lives of ex-offenders, domestic violence should be emphasized as much as employment, housing and chemical dependency.

Offenders who return to jail or prison often say that conflict within their intimate relationship is a problem second only to substance abuse, Pope said. Other studies also show that many men violate the terms of their release, and return to prison because of domestic violence offenses.

[HF1733](#), sponsored by Paymar and included in the omnibus bill, would provide \$500,000

over the next biennium to non-profit organizations that work to reduce domestic violence among offenders reentering a community and reduce criminal recidivism due to domestic violence.

Paymar, a teacher, social worker and author of two books on domestic violence, is under no illusion that every offender will take advantage of the opportunities available. Nor does he believe that these programs will be the solution to the state's crime problem. These are steps in a long process, he said. 

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

The State of Hockey

| | |
|--|--------|
| Times, including this year, the Minnesota Wild has been in the playoffs | |
| during its six seasons | 2 |
| Rounds the Wild played in the 2003 postseason | 3 |
| Times the Wild has failed to sell out a preseason, regular season or postseason game | 0 |
| Year Marian Gaborik was the Wild's first-ever draft pick | 2000 |
| Career regular season points by Gaborik, the Wild's all-time leading scorer | 331 |
| Games he has played | 408 |
| Career goals, assists by Wild enforcer Derek Boogaard in 113 games over two seasons | 2, 5 |
| Penalty minutes | 278 |
| In its 26 years in Minnesota, times the North Stars made the playoffs | 17 |
| Year the North Stars moved to Dallas | 1993 |
| Score of the Wild win over Dallas in the teams' first meeting on Dec. 17, 2000 | 6-0 |
| Coaches for the Minnesota North Stars | 20 |
| Minnesota Wild coaches | 1 |
| Total hockey participants in the state in 2005-06 | 66,321 |
| Five years prior | 63,500 |
| Players registered with Minnesota Hockey to play hockey in the state in 2005-06, | |
| not including high school teams | 45,121 |
| Approximate number of coaches registered | 8,000 |
| Approximate number of referees registered | 2,500 |
| Growth in numbers of registered girls hockey players in past five years | 22 |
| State rank among female hockey players | 1 |
| Schools participating in high school boys hockey in 2005-06 | 268 |
| Participants | 5,438 |
| Schools participating in high school girls hockey in 2005-06 | 234 |
| Participants | 3,634 |
| Between 2002 and 2006, times the South St. Paul High School girls team | |
| won the state tournament | 4 |
| State titles won by the Roseau High School boys team, including this year | 7 |
| Times the University of Minnesota mens team has been national champions | 5 |
| Womens team | 3 |
| National titles won by the University of Minnesota-Duluth womens team | 3 |

— M. COOK

Sources: [Minnesota Wild](#); [University of Minnesota](#); [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#); [Minnesota Hockey](#); [www.sportsencyclopedia.com](#); [Minnesota State High School League 2005-06 Annual Report](#).

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SESSION WEEKLY



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MEDICAL MARIJUANA

MORE OMNIBUS BILLS HIT THE FLOOR

BROADBAND CATCH UP

HF2422 - HF2443

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: Colin Wilkinson, of St. Paul, drums up support to cut taxes with participants at a Tax Rally in front of the Capitol April 14.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

A heated debate

Global warming divides legislators along party lines

By NICK BUSSE

Two very different crowds of people — both numbering in the thousands — found themselves congregating less than 100 yards away from each other April 14 on the grassy mall in front of the State Capitol building. One group came to protest tax increases proposed by DFL legislators; the other came to call for legislation that would help curb global warming.

The two events weren't planned to coincide with each other, but a few of the tax protesters decided to make their opinion on global warming known. They lingered on the edge of the crowd holding up brightly colored signs that read "I (HEART) GLOBAL WARMING." This piqued the interest of the environmentalists, some of whom decided to confront the sign-bearers.

The sporadic arguing that ensued didn't get too out of hand — possibly thanks in part to a pair of State Patrol officers patrolling the Capitol grounds that day — but it did point to what has become a prominent feature of the debate on climate change. For better or worse, the debate on global warming, like so many other debates, has fallen dependably along partisan lines. Nowhere is this truer than in the Minnesota Legislature.

Differing views

Global warming, the increase in average worldwide temperatures that many scientists attribute to a dramatic spike in greenhouse gas

emissions in the last century, has captivated the American public in recent years — a trend reflected in recent public opinion polls, as well as by the notoriety garnered by "An Inconvenient Truth," former Vice President Al Gore's documentary film on the subject.

At the Legislature, the issue has been given a sense of urgency this year, with House and Senate DFLers pushing hard for legislation that would help reduce global warming. This involves two strategies: investing in renewable energy sources that do not contribute to climate change, and a more direct approach that would place a cap on greenhouse gas emissions.

The first strategy has enjoyed bipartisan support. Investing in renewable energy is perceived to have a number of ancillary benefits unrelated to climate change, such as creating jobs, spurring rural economic growth and cutting down on pollution. As a result, the most aggressive renewable energy standard in the United States — 25 percent renewable power by 2025 — passed both the House and Senate with overwhelming

bipartisan majorities early on in the session, and was eagerly signed into law Feb. 22 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The second approach, however, is more controversial. Capping or reducing greenhouse gas emissions places a burden on power companies that only makes sense if you believe humans are causing global warming. Not everyone does.

"I know there's varying views of it, but I think most of the Republican members think it's being overplayed as an absolute science law that has been tested and proven," said [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake).

Westrom, the lead Republican on the House Energy Finance and Policy Division, is confounded by the seemingly unanimous consensus among Democrats about global warming.

In January, DFLers organized an unprecedented joint House and Senate informational presentation on the issue. Members of various environment and energy-related committees gathered in the House Chamber Jan. 30 to hear presentations on climate change by scientists, environmentalists and religious leaders. The crux of their message: global warming is real, its consequences will be devastating and action must be taken to stop it.

"The alarm on global climate change has been sounded, and now is the time to act," [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) proclaimed at the presentation. Westrom complains that no opposing viewpoints were offered.

"We've gone from discussion and debate about global warming to all of the sudden, 'It's fact. There's no more research needed, and let's take drastic steps that may or may not be solutions to a problem that may or may not exist,'" Westrom said.

Mitigating the problem

If there is a political football in the debate on global warming in Minnesota, it is the Global Warming Mitigation Act of 2007. Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill ([HF375/SF192](#)) would implement a cap-and-trade system on greenhouse gas emissions, whereby aggregate emissions from power plants would be limited and power companies



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TOM OLSCHIED

First Reading continued on page 4

given “allowances” of emissions that they could trade with one another. The overall goal would be to reduce emissions to 80 percent below their 2005 base levels by 2050.

According to Ruud, the science on global warming is solid, and it would be foolish not to take steps to address it.

“My main motivation is my kids. As an adult and as a policymaker, I really think it’s irresponsible to allow public policy to continue ignoring our current knowledge,” she said.

Ruud and other supporters of global warming legislation point to reports like the one recently released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international organization that assesses research on global warming. A summary of the report, based on the conclusions of hundreds of international scientists, was released April 6, outlining some of the likely effects of global warming in the coming century: violent weather, heat waves, shortages of fresh water and changing ecosystems across the globe.

Some, like [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji),

say that the effects of global warming can already be observed here in Minnesota. Moe said that winters in northern Minnesota have been getting increasingly shorter in recent years, impacting the economy in his district, which relies heavily on outdoor recreation.

“We’re feeling the impacts now,” he stated during a March 6 committee hearing on Ruud’s bill.

Nevertheless, many Republicans aren’t sold on the science of global warming — or the Global Warming Mitigation Act.

“The global warming act that’s been brought forward to us is given to inexperienced legislators that have no clue what they’re doing and are being led around by the environmental activists,” said [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton).

Magnus, who supports renewable energy, is nevertheless skeptical about global warming.

“I don’t really think it’s a partisan issue; I think it’s an issue of if you support the claims of the environmental activists who’ll tell you in one sentence that two-plus-two equals three, and two sentences later that two-plus-two equals 10, and not being able to justify either one.”

Finding common ground

One Republican who does believe that global warming is caused by humans is [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount).

Ozment believes that as evidence of global warming continues to mount, and as the economic implications of climate change become clear, many of his Republican colleagues will convert to his point of view.

However, Ozment also believes that a global problem requires a global solution. Although it’s important for the state to take steps to deal with global warming, Ozment said a cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions — and the economic burdens it would entail — makes little sense unless it’s implemented on a nationwide basis.

“Many times I see my colleagues ... want to take tremendous reversal actions right here in Minnesota, as if our changes or our actions are going to somehow correct the world’s problem. It’s not,” Ozment said.

Other legislators, regardless of their views on the subject, see a groundswell of public support for global warming legislation. During a Feb. 19 floor debate on the renewable energy standard bill, for example, [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) offered his fellow conservatives a word of advice on why they should pay attention to global warming:

“For a lot of you, I think you should



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Alex Lagergran, center, is surrounded as she fills in the footprint she drew on a petition to lesson the “global carbon footprint” during a Global Warming Day of Action rally on the front lawn of the Capitol April 14.

Warming continued on page 23

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held April 12-19 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

GOVERNMENT

An end to a department

A Gov. Tim Pawlenty-led initiative to abolish the Department of Employee Relations was passed unanimously by the House April 17.

Sponsored by [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), [HF1048](#) would abolish the department as of June 1, 2008, and transfer the duties to the departments of Finance, Administration and Health. The state would see an initial savings of \$139,000 a year — the commissioner's salary — with the potential for more savings with shared agency services, Pelowski said.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope) is the sponsor.

"We do have complete support with most of the employee unions," DOER Commissioner Patricia Anderson said in a previous committee hearing. She indicated there wouldn't be any job losses, but some job descriptions could change.

This was a concern for [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria). "We're getting rid of an entire state agency and the result of that is the net savings to the taxpayer of one job," he said on the House floor. There have to be more efficiencies there, he added.

"The bill reflects the negotiations by Commissioner Anderson," Pelowski said. There is a potential for more savings in coming years, he said.

Pelowski said he approved of the union-sponsored language in the bill that states: "In addition to any other protection, no employee in the classified service shall suffer job loss, have a salary reduced, or have employment benefits reduced as a result of a reorganization mandated or recommended." Any action taken after July 1, 2009 would not be considered a result of reorganization, under the bill.

— P. OSTBERG

Local to statewide cable franchising

Providing more competition between cable providers in the state is the aim of a bill sponsored [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul). [HF2351](#) was approved without recommendation April 13 by the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division. It now goes to the Commerce and Labor Committee. Johnson said his intent is that it be the catalyst for more discussion on the subject.

The bill's provisions, brought to Johnson by Qwest Communications International Inc., would shift cable regulation from local governments to the state, and call for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to authorize the video providers. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the change would relieve carriers from negotiating with municipalities to offer services. Some providers argue these negotiations are barriers to entry into the market.

A Federal Communications Commission report released in December 2006 noted that cable prices overall increased more than 5 percent in 2005, and by 93 percent prior to the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 — although prices are 17 percent lower where wire-line cable competition is present, the report states.

Through changes proposed in the bill, Qwest is seeking to provide wire-line cable competition. John Stanoch, Qwest state president, said the bill would "mainly increase competition that will result in lower prices for consumers and accelerate the deployment of broadband throughout the state." In nine other states, cable providers are regulated at the state level, he said.

Tony Mendoza, representing the Minnesota Cable Communications Association, said "The Qwest bill is a solution in search of a problem." Current state law works to bring telephone and video services to everyone, he said.

Gerald Knickerbocker, representing the Minnesota Telecom Alliance, said the industry has little competition and that "you can see it in the rates." The bill would create a more balanced playing field for telecommunications companies looking to enter the marketplace, he said.

The Senate companion, [SF2216](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action in the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Omnibus bills keep rolling along

As of press time, the House was still expected to act upon several omnibus bills this week. Look to next week's Session Weekly for updated features or highlights on the following bills and others:

- [HF953/SF1997*](#) - Omnibus state government finance bill;
- [HF797/SF1989*](#) - Omnibus higher education finance bill; and
- [HF297/SF2171*](#) - Omnibus health care and human services finance bill.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Freedom to Breathe

With approval by the House Finance Committee April 16, the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 must now overcome a final hurdle: the House floor.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), [HF305/SF238*](#), which passed the Senate 41-24 on March 27, would ban smoking in public places including bars, restaurants, places of employment and public transit.

Proponents have often classified the issue as one of worker safety, saying that secondhand smoke has been scientifically proven to adversely affect nonsmokers.

"This bill is an effort to protect the workforce from an unsafe workplace," Huntley said. "There is no risk-free exposure to secondhand smoke."

Opponents argue that the legislation would stifle individual rights, and may impose hardship to businesses forced to acquiesce to a ban.

"Contrary to what people say, I think if this bill passed it will have a substantial impact on income," [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) said.

During its travels through more than a half-dozen committees, members adopted an amendment that would permit smoking in bars — defined as having at least 50 percent of sales from liquor — with enclosed, ventilated smoking rooms, so long as they're given local approval.

An amendment successfully offered by Rukavina earlier this session would also make employees who lose their job due to bar closure eligible for the Dislocated Worker Program, which provides counseling, training and job placement services to people who are unemployed.

Several members attempted but failed to amend the bill in the House Finance Committee, including [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), who sought language prohibiting smoking of marijuana in public places. The effort was in response to [HF655](#), sponsored by Huntley, which would permit medicinal use of the drug. The amendment failed.

Seifert and others also challenged the legislation's fairness, saying the bill wrongly exempts casinos on tribal land, and would force change on business owners such as farmers, who work with very small staffs on private land.

"I marvel at the overreaching of this bill," Seifert said. "Many people think this is confined to bars, but it's much more than that."

— M. SIMPSON

Split in two

Over two days of hearings, a set of procedural moves were used to align provisions from the omnibus housing and public health finance bill, HF2241, with two Senate omnibus bills. The House Finance Committee split the House bill April 12, with some provisions being attached to one omnibus package and some onto another.

Sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF2241](#) provided \$556 million for affordable, transitional and emergency housing; environmental research; and 17 state boards, including the Veterans Home Board.

Articles pertaining to health and human services were folded into [SF2171](#), the omnibus health care and human services finance bill, sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls). Such provisions include studies on health and the environment and funding for boards.

The remaining provisions, which pertained to housing, were incorporated into the omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill, [SF2089](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

The day before, committee members amended HF2241, removing a study on the herbicide Atrazine, an effort led by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), who said the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division, which he chairs, should have debated the issue.

"You're picking one chemical, and it's an ag chemical," he said. "It's a message I'm trying to send on process; it's not Atrazine."

Others tried to push more funding for Gov. Tim Pawlenty's pandemic flu initiative, which would receive \$19.75 million in his proposal. Efforts were curbed after a promise from Huntley, who said he would add funding once the provision was added to SF2171.

— M. SIMPSON

POST HASTE



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

A figure walking along the second floor of the State Capitol building gives scale to the Italian marble columns surrounding the grand staircase.

A miner's disease

Members from two House divisions heard about plans for two proposed studies concerning mesothelioma — a rare, fatal form of cancer most often found in miners and other laborers exposed to asbestos and similar fibers.

The House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division met two weeks after the Minnesota Department of Health announced its intentions to conduct research.

The first study would be an extension of research first completed in 2003, which examined how asbestos affected 72,000 miners working on Minnesota's Iron Range from 1930 to 1982. At a cost of \$750,000 to \$1 million, the new study would evaluate the consequences of taconite dust exposure and compare the health of miners originally studied to the health of Minnesota's general population.

The second study, at a cost of \$250,000, would attempt to set regulatory exposure limits of airborne dust based on assessments of cancer risks in the region.

Health department representatives said they hope to complete both studies without state funding, relying on federal funds for the first study and existing department money for the second.

The studies come in the wake of 35 new cases of the disease, identified from the pool of miners previously studied.

Testifiers were careful to draw distinctions between mesothelioma and another asbestos-related disease, asbestosis, which eliminates lung tissue to the point of suffocation after prolonged exposure. They said mesothelioma — a lung tumor — can emerge 40 to 50 years after exposure to "relatively low" asbestos levels.

Dr. Ian Greaves, an occupational environmental physician for the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota, said that taconite fibers, which are released to the air through crushing, are presumed to have the same health effects as asbestos, though studies have yet to prove the link.

"It's unknown to what extent taconite is likely causing these problems," he said. According to the Department of Health, 136 men were diagnosed with mesothelioma between 1988 and 2005, more than twice the expected number.

The divisions took no action.

— M. SIMPSON

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

HUMANITIES

Funding the state's sesquicentennial

The state will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2008, and many cities and counties won't be far behind. Minnesotans could help fund these celebrations if a new contribution checkoff is added to 2007 and 2008 state tax forms.

[HF1009](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), would place a sesquicentennial checkoff on corporate and individual state income tax and property tax refund returns so taxpayers could make voluntary contributions of \$1 or more to an account for sesquicentennial celebrations throughout the state.

The bill was laid over April 12 for possible omnibus bill inclusion by the House Taxes Committee. There is no Senate companion.

When more donation checkoffs are added to tax forms, contributions to existing checkoffs go down, said Nina Manzi, legislative analyst with the nonpartisan House Research Department. She added that some states require each checkoff to generate a certain level of income or they are removed from the tax form — but since the sesquicentennial checkoff would only be temporary, this would not apply.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) said if the Legislature was going to consider this checkoff, it should have been done a couple of years ago so the money would already be available.

Any money contributed to the account would be tax deductible, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department. The money would be used by the Minnesota Historical Society to fund celebrations, including grants to cities and counties.

— S. HEGMAN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mansions for rent

Two mansions in Little Falls have the chance of being used by the public, if a 2006 law is repealed.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton), [HF756](#) would repeal a 2006 law, initiated by former Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), that prohibits a city from selling, leasing or contracting away city-owned property listed on the National Register of Historic Places unless the city follows certain procedures that take at least two years. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, based on the criteria defining the cities, the law applies to Little Falls.

The buildings in question are two mansions donated to the city 10 years ago. The 2006 law prohibits the city from making any money from the property. Getting rid of this law will let the city use the property, Doty said. For example, currently if someone wants to have wedding party there, the city is unable to lease

Highlights continued on page 23

ENLIGHTENING DISCUSSION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Rep. Tom Hackbarth, left, and Sen. Larry Pogemiller, center, join Mary Lahammer, right, host of Almanac: At the Capitol, in the House Chamber gallery to debate dedicating money to the environment and arts, as members continued to debate the omnibus K-12 education finance bill April 18.

Nearly unanimous support

Vets return, biofuel initiatives — unlikely mix draws bipartisan praise

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

In what can only be described as sweeping bipartisan support, the omnibus agriculture, rural economies and veterans affairs finance bill passed the House 131-2 on April 17.

HF2227, sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), was the first in a string of omnibus bills to be acted on by the House this week. The \$175.1 million General Fund budget proposal is the culmination of work completed in the House Veterans Affairs Division, the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division and its corresponding policy committee.

Overall, Republicans were on board in complimenting the bill's provisions.

"If we could slim the bill down a tiny bit and get quick agreement, this could be a very good start to the session in getting bipartisan support on ag and veterans," [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) said. He added that the bill may be one of the few to avoid Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto pen because its proposed spending is nearly in line with the governor's target.

Opposition came, however, from [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan), [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) and [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake), who announced his intention not to cast a vote on the bill.

Buesgens objected to the three fees that are proposed in the bill. "Right out of the chute, we have to start sticking it to the taxpayers," he said.

Olson said that procedurally he questioned the bill because it is not on a single subject, as required by the state constitution.

Except for amendments from the sponsor, the bill remained amendment-free through the committee process; however, two amendments were successfully added during floor discussion. While one is technical in nature, the other,

added by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport), deals with an unintended consequence for deployed National Guard members who play amateur baseball.

Heidgerken said that without the amendment, baseball-playing guard members who are expected to return in late summer — just in time for playoff games governed by an amateur athletic association — would find themselves benched because of a rule stating that players must participate in at least four games before the playoffs. The amendment states that a military person who is a qualified member of the team would be eligible for play.

Preparing for vets return

The bill offers a significant increase to the budgets for the departments of agriculture, veterans affairs and military affairs.

Juhnke drew attention to the 91 percent budgetary increase proposed for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which would receive \$27.4 million over the biennium. He said the bulk of the money would go

to programming and services to address the needs of the returning military members — especially in preparation for the expected return later this summer, en masse, of

A Quick Look HF2227

Focus: Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, Board of Animal Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Military Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs.

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$175.1 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Ethanol producer payments..... | \$30.3 mil. |
| Enlistment incentives..... | \$20.4 mil. |
| Next Generation initiative..... | \$4.4 mil. |
| Clean Water Legacy | \$2.7 mil. |
| Dairy development and enhancement grants..... | \$2 mil. |
| Renewable energy grants | \$1.2 mil. |
| Organics product cost share | \$ 1 mil. |
| Vets depleted uranium screening..... | \$1 mil. |
| Second Harvest food bank milk grants | \$1 mil. |
| Vets higher ed. offices..... | \$900,000 |
| Bovine tuberculosis elimination | \$816,000 |
| Minnesota Grown promotion activities | \$372,000 |
| Sustainable demonstration projects | \$320,000 |
| World War II dedication | \$250,000 |
| Honor guard reimbursement..... | \$200,000 |
| Vets counseling | \$80,000 |
| Duluth Port grain inspection | \$50,000 |

Selected policy provisions:

- develop Minnesota Grown organics label
- system for statewide collection of waste pesticides
- establishment of a Minnesota Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council and program
- establishment of a Food Safety and Defense Task Force
- sunset continued for five years on open-air swine basin moratorium
- by 2025, no less than 25 percent of total energy consumed in the state to come from renewable resources
- a nonappropriated fund for recreational activities and facilities at National Guard-controlled operations, including Camp Ripley



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Al Juhnke describes the omnibus agriculture, rural economies and veterans affairs finance bill during floor debate on the House floor April 17.

more than 2,500 deployed National Guard members.

The Department of Military Affairs would receive \$40.2 million over the biennium.

From college campuses to medical help, “We want to be prepared,” Juhnke said.

Veterans outreach programs would see significant funding. More than \$2.8 million would be provided over the biennium to the base for veterans programs and services at the county level. The bill would also provide \$1 million over the biennium for expansion of the higher education veterans assistance programs, which include informational offices on various campuses of higher education.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have provided more money for that effort. He said that many veterans will go to college upon returning from service, and that it is not always an easy transition (figures show about a 30 percent drop-out rate for combat veterans). “We want to make sure that after 16 months, our guys are properly served on the campuses. ... We need to boost this.”

Ag issues

While veterans issues received a good share of the attention, agriculture-related issues would get most of the funding proposed in the bill.

Overall, the bill proposes \$105 million over the biennium for various ag programming, including proposals relating to the governor’s Next Generation biofuel initiative.

Funds to be appropriated in the second year of the biennium would be awarded by a new NextGen Energy Board, which would be created in the first year of the biennium. The board would also research and report to the commissioner of agriculture and the Legislature on how the state can invest its resources to achieve energy independence. The board would be charged with developing grant programs to assist locally owned facilities to move the state toward energy independence through the production of bioenergy.

Funding is also proposed for ethanol producer payments and grants for several sustainable and organic programs and research.

‘Thank you’

Before the vote, members one after another stood to extend their thank-yous to the committee members for the bill’s initiatives.

“We are at a key time in Minnesota. We have the most returning veterans since World War II and what we are doing is so important for their reintegration,” [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) said.

It was not just the military provisions that drew accolades. Members complimented the inclusion of provisions they said would move the state’s biofuel industry in a new direction, and especially in the use of cellulosic materials.

“I do appreciate the investment this bill makes as a big part of the future of agriculture and for the state in general when we look at the biofuels efforts that are in the bill,” [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) said.

The Senate passed the bill 65-0 April 19 after deleting the House language and inserting its own. The bill will now be returned to the House. [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy) is the Senate sponsor. 🗽

Everything under the sun

Bill boosts funding for environment, natural resources, energy

By Nick Busse

After more than 10 hours of floor debate that lasted into the early morning hours of April 18, the House passed the omnibus environment, natural resources and energy finance bill 95-38.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill ([HF2410/SF2096*](#)) would appropriate more than \$449 million — an \$85 million net increase — from the General Fund, with an emphasis on new funding for clean water and renewable energy. It now goes back to the Senate, where it passed 61-2 on March 27.

The bill proposes spending approximately \$22 million more than the governor's budget recommendations. [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) warned that the governor would never sign such a bill.

"Members, the bill is destined to a veto," Sviggum said. He unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have reinstated most of the governor's original proposals. [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) derided the amendment as a "rubber stamp for the governor."

"Members, we're the House of Representatives. We don't live in a monarchy where, when the governor says 'jump,' we say 'how high.' It's our responsibility to actually put our own budget together," Sertich said.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) used the occasion to criticize the DFL majority for forging ahead with budget bills he said would necessitate a tax increase.

"You can't be voting for each and every one of these bills and expect that we're going to

have a balanced budget at the end of the day, unless you're going to have a big tax increase — and I know there are people on the other side of the aisle that just want to force that to happen," he said.

In all, 47 amendments were offered to the bill, which covers topics ranging from invasive aquatic species to rural wind energy. It also contains a number of provisions unrelated to energy or the environment. Primarily, these deal with financial services regulated by the Department of Commerce.

Environment

The environment and natural resources portion of the bill, which comes from [HF1651](#)

(also sponsored by Wagenius), contains new funding for Clean Water Legacy programs, invasive species programs, the Board of Water and Soil Resources and state and metropolitan parks and trails.

Numerous amendments were offered to remove several controversial policy provisions in the bill. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar

A Quick Look SF2096

Focus: Board of Water and Soil Resources, Department of Commerce, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Zoological Garden, Pollution Control Agency, Public Utilities Commission and Science Museum of Minnesota

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$431.4 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

New or added programming:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Clean Water Legacy | \$47.1 mil. |
| BWSR | \$14.7 mil. |
| Hydrogen power grants | \$10 mil. |
| Renewable energy research | \$10 mil. |
| E85 Everywhere | \$8 mil. |
| Rural wind energy | \$5.3 mil. |
| Rock-Tenn steam plant | \$4 mil. |
| Aquatic invasive species | \$3.2 mil. |
| Metropolitan parks | \$1.5 mil. |
| State parks and trails | \$1.5 mil. |
| Science Museum | \$1 mil. |
| Minnesota Zoo | \$1 mil. |

Selected policy provisions:

- greater oversight responsibilities and powers for BWSR
- a venison donation program for deer hunters, funded by a \$1 surcharge on all deer licenses
- a ban on off-road vehicle trails on state lands in four northern Minnesota counties
- restrictions on the release of genetically engineered wild rice
- cash bonuses for state employees who make energy-efficiency suggestions that save the state money
- shade tree pest control programs
- a report and testing for endocrine disruptors in state surface waters
- various changes to laws relating to wetland conservation and replacement
- various changes to laws relating to financial services regulation by the Department of Commerce



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Jean Wagenius discusses SF2096, the omnibus environment, natural resources and energy finance bill, on the House floor April 17. Sponsored by Wagenius, the bill provides funding for a wide array of programs.

unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have removed a ban on off-road vehicle trails on state-administered lands in Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties. All of the state's 4X4 truck trails are currently located in those four counties.

"All they've got is 11 miles of trails. Eleven miles — that's all there is in the entire state, and I think we should allow them to have their 11 miles of trail, and not do away with the sport," Hackbarth said.

[Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), who sponsored the provision, said the use of "monster mudder" trucks on state trails causes serious ecological damage to state forests and wetlands.

"We have to draw a line somewhere, members," he said.

Hackbarth also tried unsuccessfully to

remove a provision of the bill that would tighten requirements for land developers to replace wetlands, arguing that the provision would cause property tax increases. To this,

"Yes, there is taxpayer expense to protecting our wetlands long-term ... but to sit up here and say, 'Don't vote to protect water because it's going to cost money,' is extremely shortsighted."

— Rep. Dennis Ozment

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) argued that public opinion strongly supports greater protection for wetlands, even if it means higher taxes.

"Yes, there is taxpayer expense to protecting our wetlands long-term ... but to sit up here and say, 'Don't vote to protect water because it's going to cost money,' is extremely shortsighted," Ozment said.

Energy

The energy provisions of the bill, pulled from [HF1392](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), would fund research and development for a diverse portfolio of

renewable energy technologies, including wind power, hydrogen power, solar power, plug-in electric hybrid vehicles and others. Also included is an \$8 million program to expand the number of ethanol pumps in the state, the so-called "E85 Everywhere" initiative.

Hilty amended the bill to allow Xcel Energy's nuclear power plant in Monticello to go ahead with construction of new above-ground dry cask storage for nuclear waste. Previously, the bill contained a provision that would have disallowed construction of the facilities until at least June 1, 2008.

[Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) objected to the amendment, arguing that there is ultimately no place for the nuclear waste to go.

"The waste that gets taken out of the reactor and put above ground at Monticello will stay there forever. I can say that with great confidence now, because in '94 we said the same thing about Prairie Island, and in fact, in 2007, it is still true," Hausman said. 🗽

It's about economic infrastructure

Provision for hockey surcharge draws criticism

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

It was called a bill about building the state's economic development infrastructure. But you could also call it the state's research and development package, tourism promotion, historical programming, housing and job concerns bill.

The omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill ([SF2089](#)) rolls in provisions brought forward through the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division.

"When you look at investing in Minnesota, many avenues play a role. But infrastructure is vitally important. This bill is about infrastructure, and that equates to jobs," said [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the bill contains several provisions previously included in other omnibus finance bills. It proposes to spend

\$370 million in General Fund money for programming over the biennium. The bill passed the House 92-39 on April 19. The amended version was returned to the Senate and a conference committee was called for.

As with most of the finance bills before the full House this week, this bill was not immune to amendment attempts. But it was a provision imposing a 25 cent surcharge for National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I mens hockey games that didn't sit well with several Republicans.

"Members, this is Minnesota. Please, not on hockey," said [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#)

(R-Lakeville). Calling the surcharge a tax, she offered an amendment to delete the provision.

Rukavina defended the surcharge that would support the United States Hockey Hall of Fame located in Eveleth. "This raises about \$134,000 a year in revenue."

The amendment opened a debate about fees passed by the Republicans during the last biennium, and fees proposed by the DFL so far this session. Sertich requested that Holberg table her amendment, saying he would find funding within the bill for the museum. She agreed to the move.

While 23 amendments were offered to the bill, few were successful. Rukavina was able to add a provision calling for a work group to develop recommendations for policies regarding the state's role in

federal trade policy.

Looking to the future

Emerging industries receive attention in the bill — for instance, nanotechnology, which can best be described as engineering of functional systems at the molecular scale.

The bill proposes to establish a nanotechnology development fund program, which would be a collaborative between the state, businesses and academic institutions to promote research and products based on nanotechnology and provide student internship opportunities in the

A Quick Look SF2089

Focus: Departments of Employment and Economic Development and Labor and Industry, and various boards and small agencies

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$370.3 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Minnesota Minerals 21st | |
| Century Fund | \$50 mil. |
| Explore Minnesota Tourism | \$24.1 mil. |
| Biobusiness Alliance of Minnesota ... | \$2.2 mil. |
| St. Paul convention center | |
| debt service | \$1.8 mil. |
| Neighborhood Development Center | |
| for assistance to Global Market | |
| businesses | \$1 mil. |
| Rural Policy and Development Center ... | \$1 mil. |
| Minnesota Alliance of Boys and | |
| Girls Clubs | \$1 mil. |
| Minnesota Inventors Congress | \$170,000 |
| Metropolitan Economic Development | |
| Association | \$510,000 |
| Nanotechnology development fund .. | \$450,000 |
| WomenVenture | \$400,000 |

Selected policy provisions:

- reduce Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board membership from 13 to 10
- call centers would need to disclose their location when asked
- working group to study state's role in federal trade policy and trade agreements
- establish small business growth acceleration program
- packinghouse workers bill of rights and ombudsman
- Safe Patient Handling Act
- ability to contact "live" specialist when seeking information about unemployment insurance
- registration of hair braiders with Minnesota Board of Barber and Cosmetology Examiners

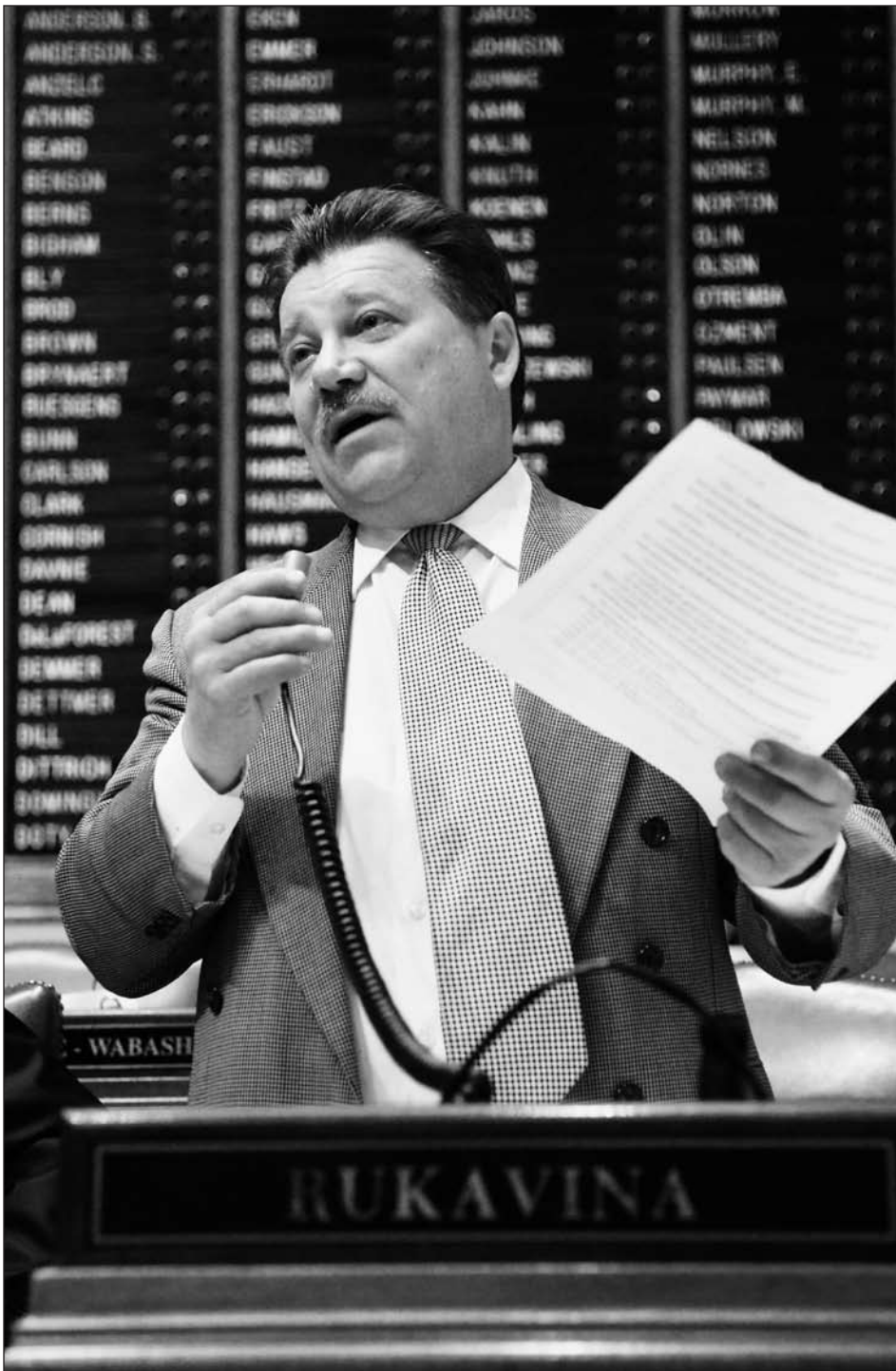


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina, sponsor of SF2089, the omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill, speaks on the House floor April 19.

field. Qualifying businesses located in the state could apply for a matching grant for nanotechnology applications, product development and research.

The fund would be administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development, with a report on its use due to the Legislature by June 30 of each odd-numbered year.

Biobusiness incentives are also included in the bill. "This is the wave of the future," said

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee.

He highlighted the money that would be going to fund University of Minnesota enterprise labs, which act as incubators for small businesses "to hopefully get our next Medtronics."

To that end, the bill allocates money to the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota to develop programs promoting the state as a global

leader in bioscience activities. The city of Worthington would receive a \$500,000 grant for an agricultural-based bioscience training and testing center.

Business and community grants

The bill lays out more than \$13 million in funding for various organizations for grant-making purposes, including the Rural Policy and Development Center. Located in St. Peter, a \$1 million grant would be used for research and policy analysis on emerging economic and social issues in rural Minnesota. The grant would only be provided with the condition that each state-appropriated dollar be matched with a nonstate dollar.

Several communities would see projects funded, including Northome where its municipal building was damaged by fire last July. The community would receive \$350,000 to help with construction of a new building. Le Sueur County would receive \$75,000 to help with the cost of cleaning up debris in lakes caused by an August tornado.

Workforce development

Mahoney spoke about the need to train the state's workforce for the emerging industries. [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) agreed and spoke of the provisions included in the bill from the division she chairs, the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division.

"This bill takes people from the traditional educational institutions back to their communities. It sets a pattern for the future and where we are going. ... The economy of Minnesota is going to be tied together and improved for all Minnesotans," she said.

Under the bill, more than \$34 million over the biennium would be dedicated to workforce development. Several job training and vocational rehabilitation programs would see funding, including more than \$12 million in General Fund money for employment services for people with severe disabilities. Money would be appropriated to support programs such as interpreters to help deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind students transition into employment.

Protecting workers

The bill addresses various safety codes, but a provision calling for a meatpackers bill of rights generated several attempts at amendments, all failing.

The bill of rights would include that employees have access to adequate facilities and equipment. In addition, basic job

Development continued on page 23

House addresses safety concerns

Victims' rights, reentry programs anchor public safety bill

By CRAIG GREEN

It was around 1 a.m. April 18 when [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) began to present [HF829](#), the omnibus public safety finance bill, on the House floor.

After he finished, [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) offered the first amendment of the night.

"I know that it's late, but with some of the things we do around here, it doesn't matter what time we do them. They're very important." Westrom then offered what many have referred to as "Emily's Law."

Emily Johnson was a 2-year-old who was killed at a daycare by a young man who was 19 days away from becoming 14 years old. This new provision would change the age at which a juvenile could be charged as an adult for a violent offense from 14 to 13. The amendment would help parents who may have to face this situation and pain in the future, Westrom said.

The amendment was overwhelmingly adopted on a voice vote.

Protection and support

HF829 covers a wide range of public safety concerns: corrections, courts, crime prevention, victim support and youth intervention programs. It proposes more than \$1.89 billion in appropriations, \$12 million more than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's recommendations.

Paymar, chairman of the House Public Safety Finance Division, focused much of his introduction on efforts to support reentry programs. Acknowledging the Legislature's responsibility for the safety of all Minnesotans, he said that there needs to be new approaches to the problems facing society.

"There are some offenders that should be

sentenced to prison for a long amount of time because of their crime and because they pose a threat to society, and there are some that must be quarantined for life," Paymar said. "But I think that it's important this body recognize that 95 percent of all offenders in our prisons will be getting out. If we want to give people who have made serious life changes a second chance, and if we want our communities to be safer, we have to have a different approach."

[Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, spoke about proposed policy changes in the bill. "There aren't a lot of glitzy things in here, but there are a lot of sound provisions that will help keep people safe and get at a lot of the criminal problems in our state," Mullery said.

"There aren't a lot of glitzy things in here, but there are a lot of sound provisions that will help keep people safe and get at a lot of the criminal problems in our state."

— Rep. Joe Mullery

of copper wiring used to transmit gas and electric.

Amendments

By the end of four hours of discussion, 20 amendments had been offered, and 11 were adopted. Republicans successfully amended the

Specifics include stronger protections for battered women and for children against sexual predators, as well as penalties for theft

A Quick Look HF829

Focus: Board of Public Defense, Board on Judicial Standards, Court of Appeals, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Rights, Department of Public Safety, Peace Officer Standards and Training Board, Private Detective Board, Sentencing Guidelines Commission, Supreme Court, Tax Court, Trial Courts, Uniform Law Commission

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$1.89 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Board of Public Defense..... | \$133.8 mil. |
| 911 Emergency Services..... | \$106 mil. |
| Supreme Court | \$89.5 mil. |
| CrimNet..... | \$6.5 mil. |
| Probation caseload reduction | \$6.2 mil. |
| Drug courts | \$6 mil. |
| New judges (6) | \$6 mil. |
| Offender re-entry services | \$5.6 mil. |
| New forensic scientists (19) | \$2.7 mil. |
| Youth intervention programs | \$2 mil. |
| Mentoring grants for incarcerated parents..... | \$400,000 |
| Legal advocacy for trafficking victims..... | \$300,000 |
| Emergency assistance grants..... | \$200,000 |

Selected policy provisions:

- changes penalties and sentencing for sex offenders
- increases penalties for theft of copper wiring
- provides more protection for victims of sexual assault
- redefines harassment on the Internet
- repeals ticket scalping law
- requires establishment of uniform per diem for prisoners housed in county and regional jails
- allows victims of domestic abuse who fear future abuse if they remain at their residence to terminate a lease agreement
- requires that anyone convicted of domestic abuse by strangulation must register as a predatory offender
- requires employers to give victims of crime time off to attend criminal proceedings related to their case



FILE PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Michael Paymar sponsors HF829, the omnibus public safety finance bill. Passed by the House April 18, the bill includes tougher penalties for sex offenders and repeals the state's ticket scalping law.

bill seven times, the DFL majority four times.

[Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City) successfully offered a provision that would prohibit civil action by anyone who claims that any weight gain, obesity or health condition is a result of consumption of a food or non-alcoholic beverage they purchased from a particular seller. Offered for another omnibus bill earlier in the session, the provision was informally dubbed the "cheeseburger law."

[Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) offered an amendment that would have allowed someone to bring a civil action for damages based on personal injury caused by criminal sexual conduct. Originally presented as HF2134, the amendment also proposed that this action could be taken "six years [from] the time that this victim fully comprehends the causal connection between the sexual abuse and the injury resulting from the abuse."

Reaction was swift. [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) raised points of order that the amendment violated House rules. Kohls said that the amendment not only deals with new causes of action that need to be discussed, it should also go before the House Ways and Means

Committee to determine its fiscal impact. Both of their points were ruled not well taken by the speaker.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) announced that "now the flood gates have opened." Seifert said he and fellow Republicans would begin preparing amendments that deal with other causes of civil action.

Discussion on the amendment continued until Mullery promised Simon that he would hold a hearing to discuss Simon's bill. (Up to this point, Mullery had refused to hear it.) Simon then withdrew the amendment.

Amendments not approved included a provision offered by [Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers) that would increase the penalty for anyone guilty of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, and an amendment from [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) that would prohibit law enforcement authorities from receiving gifts or prizes.

Forty-five votes

Just before the final vote, Seifert congratulated Paymar on the bill. He said that it was "close to being doable," and that

it was "not a medicine cabinet full of poison pills." Seifert also warned that there are still a few sections that may not get past Pawlenty and could sink the bill.

"Please take us at our word, Rep. Paymar," he said. "If there is a veto [from the governor], there are 45 votes over here to sustain it."

The bill passed 96-34.

The companion bill, [SF1992](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed by the Senate 63-0 April 18, and laid on the table. HF829 now awaits action by the Senate.



Where to find information

House Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

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More funding for K-12

Compensatory funding and responsible sex education raise questions

BY STEPHEN HARDING

The omnibus K-12 education finance bill passed on the House floor 119-13 in the early morning hours of April 19. Its next destination will be a conference committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) outlines more than \$13.9 billion in spending for the 2008-09 biennium. The Senate version of the bill, [SF2095](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer) was approved 51-12 on March 26 and laid on the table.

HF6 is the combined blood, sweat and tears of the House K-12 Finance Division, the House E-12 Education Committee and the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division. The bill would increase education funding by \$919 million, and includes \$125 million in property tax relief and \$211 million in early education funding.

Many House members praised the bill, including co-sponsor [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), who said, "This bill is not a good bill, but a great bill."

Overall, the bill received bipartisan support; however, individual components of the bill did not.

Opposition

The portion of the bill that contains the "responsible family life and sexuality education programs" drew the most debate. [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) and [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls) battled over numerous amendments dealing with parental choice, and whether schools districts or parents should teach students about sex.

One amendment offered by Gottwalt would

have provided for a curriculum that would promote abstinence until marriage. "Abstinence programs are sometimes pooh-pooched," he said, but cited a source that he said shows that abstinence programs work.

'This is not a good bill, but a great bill. Our greatest resource isn't our lakes, rivers, harvest land, forests or minerals. Our greatest resource, our greatest asset is our young and they deserve nothing less than this bill.'

— Rep. Carlos Mariani

responsibility, and some of the language in the section is discouraging. "Abstinence is OK on one hand, and contraception is needed on the other; anyone that is a good teacher knows you can't teach contradictory concepts side by side," Erickson said.

Walker pointed out that the bill not only deals with sex, but also healthy relationships. Gottwalt told her that it is not up to her or the school districts to be teaching this, since the subject matter is not like math and science.

[Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) objected to the disparity in funding for schools because of compensatory funding. Minneapolis and St. Paul schools would be receiving a higher amount of funding than other metro and Greater Minnesota schools — an extra \$153 per pupil.

A Quick Look HF6

Focus: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Safety, ECFE, Head Start, Minnesota Council on Economic Education, Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, Minnesota and National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Minnesota State Academies, Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Minnesota State College and Universities, Office of Educational Accountability, Perpich Center for Arts Education, Special Education Task Force, University of Minnesota

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$13.9 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

Special education excess cost aid\$257 mil.
Voluntary all-day kindergarten.....\$94 mil.
Adult basic education aid.....\$82 mil.
ECFE.....\$42.9 mil.
Head Start.....\$40.2 mil.
Minnesota State Academies.....\$23 mil.
Library support.....\$35.6 mil.
Perpich Center for Arts Education.....\$13.5 mil.
Limited English proficiency.....\$11.2 mil.
International Baccalaureate Programs...\$9 mil.
21st Century High Schools.....\$8.7 mil.
Early childhood community hubs.....\$2 mil.
McGregor (4) declining pupil aid.....\$100,000

Selected policy provisions:

- responsible family life and sexuality education programs
- allows school staff to take Veterans Day off if they're a veteran
- alternative school calendar pilot program and grants provided
- world language programs authorized and grants provided
- Minnesota Indian scholarship program
- scholar loan program to encourage academically talented postsecondary students of color to become E-12 teachers
- early childhood community hub planning and implementation grants



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Mindy Greiling presents the House omnibus K-12 education finance bill during floor session April 18.

“This bill moves away from equity and moves away from fairness,” Sviggum said. “The disparity of the winners and losers actually grows in this bill. This ought to be a concern for those who are not from Minneapolis and St. Paul.”

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) told Sviggum that he was living in a “fairy-tale world.”

“I’m tired of sitting on this House floor and listening to fairy tales,” he said.

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) and [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood) unsuccessfully offered amendments that would have prohibited the distribution of political campaign materials through schools. Dean’s amendment would have prohibited teachers from being used as campaigners for a particular candidate. Dean said he brought his third-grade child to the first day of class and the teacher was wearing a campaign t-shirt for his opponent. “How would you feel if you’re that little 9-year-old kid ... if your parent’s opponent’s campaign sticker was on the teacher’s desk?” Dean asked.

Amendments adopted

[Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) successfully offered an amendment that would direct the commissioner of education to review the Appleton, Wis., school district’s nutrition program. The emphasis of the report would be on enhancements to school nutritional programs that have resulted in positive impacts on special education outcomes and costs.

Erickson successfully offered an amendment that would create an advisory task force that would consider and recommend a redesign of middle schools. Erickson wants the study done due to the fact that test scores start to decline in middle school for all sort of students.

[Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti) offered a successful amendment that changes the percentage of funding that would go toward Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. The requirement would now be that 75 percent of the funding goes toward AP and 25 percent toward IB.

“Two hundred and seventy schools offer AP courses and only 11 schools offer IBO, and there are 18,900 students in AP and

1,241 students in IBO,” Eastlund said. The amendment changes the amount allocated to reflect the proportion of students that are enrolled in each program.

Eastlund also successfully amended the bill to modify a state law that allows school boards to call special elections to vote on matters requiring voter approval. He said the problem is that 50 or more voters, or 5 percent of the number of voters, can call a special election repeatedly. The amendment would tighten the rules calling for a vote.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) successfully offered an amendment that would allow students who attend charter schools to participate in extracurricular activities in the regular school district in which they reside.

Where to find information

Chief Clerk’s Office

211 State Capitol (651) 296-2314

The Chief Clerk’s Office provides copies at no charge of bills, all agendas for House sessions, and the Journal of the House.

Ramping up speed

Cities push state to play broadband catch up

By PATTY OSTBERG

"Faster, faster!" come the cries from small-business workers looking to stake their claim in the economic landscape.

Technology needs for at-home workers are increasing faster than technology is able to keep up, say some Minnesota experts. As at-home workers, and those in smaller businesses, see the landscape of opportunity, they're also facing Internet technological barriers at local and state levels.

"The U.S. really falls short in delivering truly high-speed broadband. Our speeds are a fraction of what many other industrialized nations of the world are able to obtain," said Tom Garrison, communications director for the city of Eagan. He said this is in part because the country does not have a formal technology goal, unlike some other nations.

He and others representing technologically diverse interests testified March 23 before the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division in favor of [HF2107](#), which would ensure that by 2015 all Minnesotans have Internet access at speeds equal to at least 1 billion bits per second.

That is 1,000 times faster than wireless, more than 330 times faster than the available DSL speeds in Minnesota, and 125 times faster than cable modem service, said [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan), the bill's sponsor. The bill would also establish a state Broadband Advisory Board and give access to all Minnesotans.

The board would consist of a governor-appointed broadband policy director along with 15 members including representatives of providers, consumers, local governments and individuals knowledgeable in telecommunications. It would make recommendations to the Legislature for achieving the 2015 access goal and ways the public and private sector can work in cooperation to achieve the goal.

The impetus for the bill came from a "Gig" group with some representatives from the Eagan Technology Working Group, which consists of businesses, residents, city leaders and technology experts, Masin said.

Garrison said about a dozen other states have some sort of broadband plan, and group members wanted to form one of their own. In the process they realized the statewide scope and importance of having an overall goal.

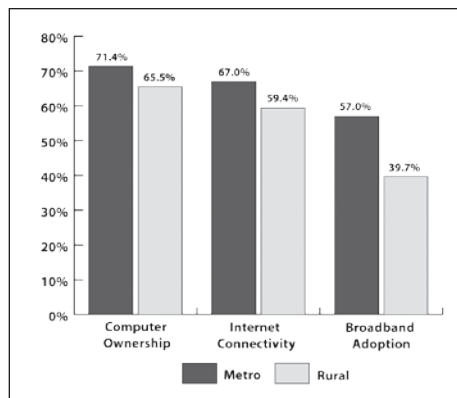
One can disagree about what's the proper speed or time limit, but Minnesota doesn't have a current plan and needs to set a policy goal of where it wants to be, he said.

The bill doesn't address the necessary funding to support such a goal, but is an attempt to bring people together to develop a policy that would allow the state to better compete with other states and countries, thereby allowing businesses to stay competitive globally, Garrison added. As an example, California has set a goal of achieving gigabit speeds (1 billion bits per second) by 2010, the same as Singapore, Garrison said.

Those testifying in favor of the bill say

"Our speeds are a fraction of what many other industrialized nations of the world are able to obtain."

— Tom Garrison,
Eagan Communications Director



Computer ownership, Internet connectivity and broadband adoption are still higher in the Twin Cities metropolitan area compared to the rest of Minnesota.

Chart courtesy of the Center for Rural Policy and Development

internationally recognized groups show the United States is falling behind as other countries increase their Internet access speeds allowing for bigger applications. A 2005 study by the International Telecommunications Union ranks the United States 16th in broadband penetration for economies, down three places from 2004.

A real life scenario showing the need could entail an at-home engineer trying to download or upload architectural specs from their Japan-based corporation. Depending on the size of the engineer's file, using a DSL line could take days or hours by cable modem. Current access speeds across the state have a form of broadband, but the access speeds are less than other countries. With the speed of broadband proposed in the bill, it could be as little as one minute to download those specs.

The Internet creation that initially enabled people to cross geographic boundaries is competitively disabling with the need for more bandwidth and faster processing speeds.

Big corporations have capital to install fiber optics, Wi-Fi or other technology needed to offer faster broadband capabilities, but small and home-based businesses across the country don't have

the funding to compete. Instead, they're limited to what local telecommunications companies offer.

Not able to wait for the state to address broadband concerns, several municipalities have given faster access speeds to residents by creating their own telecommunications providers.

In November 2000, 67 percent of Windom voters gave city leaders the authority to construct, purchase or acquire a telephone exchange. Now the city manages its own

Broadband in rural Minnesota

The availability of broadband in rural Minnesota, excluding Rochester, St. Cloud and Duluth, generally relates to socioeconomic status and availability, according to a report by the Center for Rural Policy and Development in St. Peter.

Jack Geller, president of the center, told the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division Feb. 16 that many rural areas in the state do have access to broadband technology, although 22 percent of rural respondents that connect to the Internet using dial up report lack of availability as the primary barrier to broadband adoption.

As a percentage, 39.4 percent of rural Minnesota has broadband in homes in 2006, while the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area is at 57 percent.

Broadband adoption is also significantly higher in the metropolitan area. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including age and income demographics and broadband availability, the report notes. The most cited reason for those who have the broadband option but choose dial up is the price difference.

telecommunications system, including door-to-door fiber optics.

At the time, there were no plans from Qwest Communications International Inc., the service carrier for the area, or any other company to provide high-speed Internet or a digital subscriber line, said Mayor Tom Riordan. Fed up with not having a choice, the residents developed a solution, he told the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division Jan. 26.

Similarly, Monticello established a Fiber Optics Task Force in 2005 to examine the possibilities of using city monies to build a fiber optics infrastructure for use by every home and business in the city. The city approached current area providers with fiber availability to every home in the area, and Monticello was told it was "not their vision," said Lynn Fleming, a member of the task force.

Monticello is now in the process of developing its own fiber optics infrastructure to allow for higher applications, she said. Presentations from the cities of Buffalo and Winona showed similar stories.

The bill was laid over by the division so various sectors can discuss ways to bring those goals to fruition, with the intention it will be further discussed next session. "At least we got the topic out with some type of goal and standards to start this," Masin said.

A companion bill, [SF1918](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

Another go for medical marijuana

Despite firm opposition, sponsors make another push for legislation

By MIA SIMPSON

As Kermit the Frog once sang, “It ain’t easy being green.” Medical marijuana legislation has a track record of failure in the House in at least six sessions past. This year’s version, [HF655](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), has survived three committee hearings so far — recently edging through the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division on a 7-6 roll call vote March 31.

However, many remain fiercely opposed to the bill, arguing that the risks of partial legalization, even for the sake of medical use, far outweigh the benefits.

Proponents

Therein lies the crux of the debate: should Minnesota make an illegal substance available to a minority, possibly at the expense of the majority? Under the bill, the group that would be eligible for this treatment are people with “chronic or debilitating diseases,” such as cancer, HIV, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis or intractable pain (defined as pain that has not responded to alternative treatments within six months).

Proponents argue that in some of these cases, conventional treatment just won’t work, and such patients currently choose to smoke marijuana despite threat of prosecution.

Thus the need for legislation, they say.

“We present this with the goal of helping sick and dying Minnesotans ... who are right now using

marijuana to elevate their pain and risking arrest to do it,” said Neal Levine, director of Minnesotans for Compassionate Care, during a House Health and Human Services Committee hearing March 8.

The bill would grant patients suffering from certain medical conditions lawful possession of marijuana so long as it’s recommended by

a physician. Patients would then register with the state on an annual basis, and receive an identification card, which they would present to an organization certified to grow plants — though the nonprofit could not begin producing the drug until it is requested by a patient.

This is a change from original language, which would have permitted a patient or a registered caregiver to grow up to 12 plants in their home. One amendment removed the right to reciprocity, which would allow cardholders from other states to obtain marijuana in Minnesota. Inserted language proposed by [Rep. Tina Leibling](#) (DFL-

Rochester), would prevent patients from smoking the drug in areas where children could inhale it.

“This is a tightly-crafted bill,” said [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), who switched his position on the legislation this year, after researching the issue. “In this case, it has been the facts and information that I’ve been made aware of that changed my perspective completely.”



Opponents

But opponents aren’t appeased. They contest marijuana’s medical efficacy, and say consequences, should the bill pass, for law enforcement, teens and the state as a whole can’t be ignored.

“Marijuana has been proved to be a harmful

drug, and legalizing it in any way will increase the harm this will do to our society,” said Mitch Weinzetl, president of the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

Becoming the 12th state to enact such legislation would result in several things, he warned. First, it would put Minnesota at odds with federal law, which does not legally consent to medical marijuana use. The Drug Enforcement Administration classifies marijuana as a Schedule I narcotic, the most dangerous of the five identified categories, making users subject to criminal penalties.

Second, law enforcement officials believe it would confuse youth, who have been consistently taught that marijuana use is wrong and illegal.

This is the reason [Rep. Rod Hamilton](#) (R-Mountain Lake) opposes the bill. Last year, Hamilton announced he had multiple sclerosis, a condition that could be treated by marijuana. He recalls the conversation he had with his two children:

“My son, who’s 15, said, ‘You know what, Dad, if there’s anything out there that can make you feel better, I support it.’”

His 12-year-old daughter quickly quipped back, “Even if it makes Dad a pothead?”

Bottom line, Hamilton said, “I’m a parent first and an MS patient second.”

Some members also say that if marijuana is indeed a miracle worker for some, the Federal Drug Administration should be the one to bless it.

“We’re trying to do in this state what the FDA is charged with doing,” [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) said during the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division meeting March 31. “Let them approve it. We do this for every other drug available.”

The House Finance Committee will see the bill next. If the measure would reach the governor’s desk, he has promised a veto.

The Senate companion, [SF345](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.



Friday, April 13

HF2422-Clark (DFL)

Taxes

Alcohol health impact fund established, and alcohol health impact fee imposed.

HF2423-Kelliher (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Companion dogs; municipalities authorized to enact ordinances allowing dogs to accompany persons patronizing outdoor areas of food and beverage establishments.

HF2424-Nelson (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Public employee retirement directors' salary limits provided and retirement associations board of trustees duties modified.

HF2425-Hilstrom (DFL)

Taxes

Kidney dialysis equipment sales tax exemption provided.

HF2426-Norton (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Disabled children human services eligibility re-termination notice required.

HF2427-Paulsen (R)

Health & Human Services

Health Information Technology and Infrastructure Advisory Committee requirements expanded.

HF2428-Rukavina (DFL)

Finance

Eveleth wastewater treatment plant renovation funding provided and bonds issued.

Monday, April 16

HF2429-Westrom (R)

Taxes

Douglas County sales tax authorized to fund a county jail and law enforcement center.

HF2430-Sertich (DFL)

Finance

Hibbing sewer and water extensions funding provided, bonds issued.

HF2431-Nornes (R)

Finance

Vergas; Roger Hanson Memorial Trail completion funding provided, bonds issued.

HF2432-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Evidence-based health care guidelines provided, provider performance evaluations regulated, voluntary purchasing pool requirements modified and health promotion and wellness provided.

Tuesday, April 17

HF2433-Marquart (DFL)

Finance

Browns Valley flood relief funding provided.

Wednesday, April 18

HF2434-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Tax increment financing technical and minor policy changes provided.

HF2435-Sviggg (R)

Taxes

Goodview water treatment facilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

Thursday, April 19

HF2436-Wollschlager (DFL)

Energy Finance & Policy Division

Nuclear waste; a resolution memorializing Congress regarding nuclear waste storage.

HF2437-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Driver's license vision-screening standards study required.

HF2438-Dettmer (R)

Taxes

Centerville; property located within certain tax increment financing districts is not commercial industrial property for purposes of metropolitan revenue distribution.

HF2439-Dettmer (R)

Taxes

Centerville; sales tax exemption provided for construction materials and equipment used to construct improvements in certain tax increment financing districts.

HF2440-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota State Fair; fish habitat educational display bonds authorized.

HF2441-Davnie (DFL)

Taxes

Sales definition modified from performance of services for regulated investment companies under the apportionment formula.

HF2442-Kahn (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

State Lottery authorized to offer games involving sports wagering and wagering pools; bookmaking authorized under licenses issued by director of the State Lottery; licensed bookmaking tax imposed and Minnesota active recreation fund created.

HF2443-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Card club operations gross receipts tax imposed and combined receipts tax on gambling reduced.

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2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives

| District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- | District | Member/Party | Room* | Phone (651) 296- |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|----------|-------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 48B | Abeler, Jim (R) | 203 | 1729 | 40B | Lenczewski, Ann (DFL) | 509 | 4218 |
| 19A | Anderson, Bruce (R) | 201 | 5063 | 66A | Lesch, John (DFL) | 537 | 4224 |
| 43A | Anderson, Sarah (R) | 229 | 5511 | 30A | Liebling, Tina (DFL) | 393 | 0573 |
| 3A | Anzelc, Tom (DFL) | 417 | 4936 | 1B | Lieder, Bernard (DFL) | 423 | 5091 |
| 39B | Atkins, Joe (DFL) | 503 | 4192 | 55A | Lillie, Leon (DFL) | 353 | 1188 |
| 35A | Beard, Michael (R) | 207 | 8872 | 59A | Loeffler, Diane (DFL) | 349 | 4219 |
| 43B | Benson, John (DFL) | 517 | 9934 | 37A | Madore, Shelley (DFL) | 507 | 5506 |
| 33B | Berns, John (R) | 311 | 4315 | 22A | Magnus, Doug (R) | 217 | 5505 |
| 57A | Bigham, Karla (DFL) | 529 | 4342 | 67A | Mahoney, Tim (DFL) | 591 | 4277 |
| 25B | Bly, David (DFL) | 557 | 7065 | 65B | Mariani, Carlos (DFL) | 563 | 9714 |
| 25A | Brod, Laura (R) | 321 | 4229 | 9B | Marquart, Paul (DFL) | 597 | 6829 |
| 27A | Brown, Robin (DFL) | 337 | 8216 | 38A | Masin, Sandra (DFL) | 527 | 3533 |
| 23B | Brynaert, Kathy (DFL) | 421 | 3248 | 53B | McFarlane, Carol (R) | 223 | 5363 |
| 35B | Buesgens, Mark (R) | 307 | 5185 | 57B | McNamara, Denny (R) | 271 | 3135 |
| 56A | Bunn, Julie (DFL) | 521 | 4244 | 4A | Moe, Frank (DFL) | 369 | 5516 |
| 45B | Carlson, Lyndon (DFL) | 479 | 4255 | 40A | Morgan, Will (DFL) | 531 | 4212 |
| 61A | Clark, Karen (DFL) | 471 | 0294 | 23A | Morrow, Terry (DFL) | 415 | 8634 |
| 24B | Cornish, Tony (R) | 281 | 4240 | 58A | Mullery, Joe (DFL) | 367 | 4262 |
| 62A | Davnie, Jim (DFL) | 545 | 0173 | 64A | Murphy, Erin (DFL) | 413 | 8799 |
| 52B | Dean, Matt (R) | 327 | 3018 | 6B | Murphy, Mary (DFL) | 343 | 2676 |
| 49A | DeLaForest, Chris (R) | 323 | 4231 | 46A | Nelson, Michael V.(DFL) | 569 | 3751 |
| 29A | Demmer, Randy (R) | 225 | 9236 | 10A | Nornes, Bud (R) | 277 | 4946 |
| 52A | Dettmer, Bob (R) | 329 | 4124 | 29B | Norton, Kim (DFL) | 387 | 9249 |
| 6A | Dill, David (DFL) | 571 | 2190 | 1A | Olin, Dave (DFL) | 593 | 9635 |
| 47A | Dittrich, Denise (DFL) | 371 | 5513 | 16B | Olson, Mark (R) | 301 | 4237 |
| 58B | Dominguez, Augustine "Willie" (DFL) | 539 | 8659 | 11B | Otremba, Mary Ellen (DFL) | 445 | 3201 |
| 12B | Doty, Al (DFL) | 433 | 4247 | 37B | Ozment, Dennis (R) | 283 | 4306 |
| 17A | Eastlund, Rob (R) | 243 | 5364 | 42B | Paulsen, Erik (R) | 309 | 7449 |
| 2A | Eken, Kent (DFL) | 575 | 9918 | 64B | Paymar, Michael (DFL) | 543 | 4199 |
| 19B | Emmer, Tom (R) | 261 | 4336 | 31A | Pelowski Jr., Gene (DFL) | 491 | 8637 |
| 41A | Erhardt, Ron (R) | 245 | 4363 | 32A | Peppin, Joyce (R) | 331 | 7806 |
| 16A | Erickson, Sondra (R) | 279 | 6746 | 20A | Peterson, Aaron (DFL) | 451 | 4228 |
| 8B | Faust, Tim (DFL) | 567 | 0518 | 41B | Peterson, Neil W. (R) | 213 | 7803 |
| 21B | Finstad, Brad (R) | 251 | 9303 | 45A | Peterson, Sandra (DFL) | 345 | 4176 |
| 26B | Fritz, Patti (DFL) | 551 | 8237 | 27B | Poppe, Jeanne (DFL) | 487 | 4193 |
| 53A | Gardner, Paul (DFL) | 581 | 2907 | 5A | Rukavina, Tom (DFL) | 477 | 0170 |
| 36B | Garofalo, Pat (R) | 221 | 1069 | 26A | Ruth, Connie (R) | 291 | 5368 |
| 15A | Gottwalt, Steve (R) | 231 | 6316 | 42A | Ruud, Maria (DFL) | 515 | 3964 |
| 54A | Greiling, Mindy (DFL) | 381 | 5387 | 2B | Sailer, Brita (DFL) | 577 | 4265 |
| 24A | Gunther, Bob (R) | 289 | 3240 | 54B | Scalze, Bev (DFL) | 357 | 7153 |
| 48A | Hackbarth, Tom (R) | 209 | 2439 | 21A | Seifert, Marty (R) | 267 | 5374 |
| 22B | Hamilton, Rod (R) | 215 | 5373 | 5B | Sertich, Anthony "Tony" (DFL) | 459 | 0172 |
| 39A | Hansen, Rick (DFL) | 401 | 6828 | 14A | Severson, Dan (R) | 233 | 7808 |
| 66B | Hausman, Alice (DFL) | 453 | 3824 | 18A | Shimanski, Ron (R) | 227 | 1534 |
| 15B | Haws, Larry (DFL) | 473 | 6612 | 44A | Simon, Steve (DFL) | 375 | 9889 |
| 13A | Heidgerken, Bud (R) | 237 | 4317 | 10B | Simpson, Dean (R) | 295 | 4293 |
| 46B | Hilstrom, Debra (DFL) | 379 | 3709 | 55B | Slawik, Nora (DFL) | 403 | 7807 |
| 8A | Hilty, Bill (DFL) | 559 | 4308 | 63B | Slocum, Linda (DFL) | 523 | 7158 |
| 36A | Holberg, Mary Liz (R) | 303 | 6926 | 33A | Smith, Steve (R) | 253 | 9188 |
| 34B | Hoppe, Joe (R) | 317 | 5066 | 3B | Solberg, Loren (DFL) | 443 | 2365 |
| 60B | Hornstein, Frank (DFL) | 437 | 9281 | 28B | Sviggum, Steve (R) | 247 | 2273 |
| 47B | Hortman, Melissa (DFL) | 377 | 4280 | 56B | Swails, Marsha (DFL) | 409 | 1147 |
| 14B | Hosch, Larry (DFL) | 565 | 4373 | 65A | Thao, Cy (DFL) | 359 | 5158 |
| 4B | Howes, Larry (R) | 287 | 2451 | 63A | Thissen, Paul (DFL) | 351 | 5375 |
| 7A | Huntley, Thomas (DFL) | 585 | 2228 | 51B | Tillberry, Tom (DFL) | 501 | 5510 |
| 7B | Jaros, Mike (DFL) | 583 | 4246 | 49B | Tingelstad, Kathy (R) | 255 | 5369 |
| 67B | Johnson, Sheldon (DFL) | 549 | 4201 | 31B | Tschumper, Ken (DFL) | 431 | 9278 |
| 13B | Juhnke, Al (DFL) | 485 | 6206 | 18B | Urdahl, Dean (R) | 239 | 4344 |
| 59B | Kahn, Phyllis (DFL) | 365 | 4257 | 62B | Wagenius, Jean (DFL) | 449 | 4200 |
| 17B | Kalin, Jeremy (DFL) | 579 | 5377 | 61B | Walker, Neva (DFL) | 553 | 7152 |
| 60A | Kelliher, Margaret Anderson (DFL) | 463 | 0171 | 12A | Ward, John (DFL) | 533 | 4333 |
| 50B | Knuth, Kate (DFL) | 429 | 0141 | 38B | Wardlow, Lynn (R) | 241 | 4128 |
| 20B | Koenen, Lyle (DFL) | 439 | 4346 | 30B | Welti, Andy (DFL) | 389 | 4378 |
| 34A | Kohls, Paul (R) | 313 | 4282 | 11A | Westrom, Torrey (R) | 273 | 4929 |
| 51A | Kranz, Scott (DFL) | 411 | 4226 | 44B | Winkler, Ryan (DFL) | 525 | 7026 |
| 50A | Laine, Carolyn (DFL) | 407 | 4331 | 28A | Wollschlager, Sandy (DFL) | 335 | 8635 |
| 9A | Lanning, Morrie (R) | 259 | 5515 | 32B | Zellers, Kurt (R) | 315 | 5502 |

*All rooms are in the State Office Building unless otherwise noted, St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Jan. 9, 2007

Highlights continued from page 7

it out. Most people in area want the property used and don't want it destroyed, he said.

The bill was passed by the House Finance Committee April 16, and now awaits action on the House floor. A companion bill, [SF585](#), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), passed the Senate 65-0 on March 23.

[Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers) said, from reading the Little Falls newspaper, the issue generated heated debate at city council meetings.

"Because the city is in favor of it, we should vote on it; but I need to do more research," she said.

— S. HEGMAN

Change in housing authorities

If [HF1161/SF1045](#)* becomes law, two housing authorities would undergo minor changes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Sen. Julianne Ortman](#) (R-Chanhassen), the bill would change the name of the Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority to the Scott County Community Development Program.

Also, as a result of an amendment offered by [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka), the city of Anoka would be allowed to provide their own provisions for the appointment of city housing and redevelopment authority commissioners.

The bill passed the Senate 60-0 on March 19, and passed the House 130-0 on April 12. The bill

has since returned to the Senate with Abeler's amendment, where it now awaits action.

— C. GREEN

Scott County personnel policies

Minnesota has an extremely effective and efficient personnel system that provides fair treatment to its applicants. Scott County would like to see if the system could work for their administration as well, Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee) said.

[HF1490](#), sponsored by Beard, would permit the county to put into place a pilot program of interviewing and hiring procedures similar to the state's.

The bill would allow Scott County to:

- administer a new employee recruitment system;
- establish new rules for creating and monitoring applicant pools;
- establish a merit system, taking into account modern business practices; and
- establish procedures for disciplinary action.

"We'd like to run with it for a couple of years and see if it works," Beard said.

The bill passed the House 130-0 on April 12, and now awaits action by the Senate, where it is sponsored by [Sen. Claire Robling](#) (R-Jordan).

— C. GREEN

St. Louis County appointments

Commissioners in one northeastern county may soon have an easier time with making appointments.

[HF1432/SF1133](#)*, sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), would allow the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners to appoint a civil service director to serve in the unclassified service. Revising current statute, the bill would eliminate a detailed appointment process which included the creation of an examination committee.

The bill passed the House 130-0 on April 12 and the Senate 65-0 on March 23. It now awaits approval from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Updating the Land Planning Act

Changes to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act are closer to becoming law with the passage of [HF881](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), the bill would clarify the 30-year-old act, eliminating outdated and erroneous references.

According to Judd Schetnan, government affairs director for the Metropolitan Council, HF881 is a "housekeeping bill" with no substantive policy changes that would be good for local governments and good for the council.

The bill passed the House 90-40 on April 12, and now awaits action by the Senate, where it is sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope).

— C. GREEN

Warming continued from page 4

remember that we have a huge wave out there — Steger, Gore, global warming, energy conservation, a move away from fossil fuels, vehicle emissions reductions and so forth. You

better climb on board, because that's the way the ship is moving, folks."

The Global Warming Mitigation Act awaits action by the full House and by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee. It has also

been incorporated into [HF436](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), which awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion, [SF145](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the full Senate. 🗽

Development continued from page 13

information such as duties, hours and wages must be provided to employees in the employee's native language.

The bill also calls for an ombudsman position to inspect and review state meatpacking operations to ensure workers have, among other things, the right to unionize, the opportunity to use adequate facilities and the right to be free from discrimination.

Several Republicans echoed [Rep. Doug](#)

[Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) that the provision was "a solution in search of a problem."

"This isn't a problem that exists. So why are we going to add on another layer of regulation? Actual numbers of injuries are decreasing," [Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove) said.

Consumers

Right to information regarding call centers is also addressed in the bill. A Minnesota resident who receives a customer service call would need to be informed of the state or

country where the customer service employee is located. Additionally, if identifying information or credit numbers are requested, the resident would have the right to request that the call be handled in the United States, if possible. 🗽

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

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota's wild

| | |
|--|---------|
| Minnesotans who partake in birdwatching each year, as percent of state's population..... | 40 |
| Estimated amount spent doing so, in millions..... | \$360 |
| Number of designated birding trails in Minnesota..... | 3 |
| Estimated number of birding sites along the Mississippi River in the state | 100 |
| Size of Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge east of Holt, in acres | 61,500 |
| Estimated number of bird species found there..... | 280 |
| Estimated number of raptors that migrate during the fall along Duluth's Hawk Ridge..... | 93,000 |
| Estimated number of ring-necked ducks that stop at Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge near McGregor each fall | 300,000 |
| Average weight of a mallard, in pounds..... | 2.5-3 |
| Size, in estimated acres, of St. Croix State Park, the state's largest state park, east of Hinckley..... | 34,000 |
| Species of frogs and toads along the Mississippi River in southern Minnesota | 12 |
| Species of butterflies, as approximate, at Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie near Lake Benton..... | 25 |
| Hibernating bats, as approximate, that winter in Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park between Spring Valley and Preston..... | 2,000 |
| Species of warblers best seen during early May at Frontenac State Park southeast of Red Wing..... | 32 |
| Approximate breeding pairs of American white pelicans at the largest colony in North America in Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area/State Park near Watson..... | 17,000 |
| Swans, as estimate, that now spend their winters on the Mississippi River near Monticello where warm water released from the power plant keeps a stretch of water open..... | 1,000 |
| Year trumpeter swans were completely eliminated by state settlers before making a comeback..... | 1890 |
| Pairs of bald eagles that nest in Minnesota | 680 |
| Estimated number of injured eagles, falcons, hawks and owls treated annually by The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota..... | 800 |
| Since 1996, average percent of bald eagles admitted to The Raptor Center each year that have toxic levels of lead in their blood..... | 25 |
| Number of deer registered to hunters in Minnesota in 2005..... | 255,736 |
| Rank in state history totals..... | 3 |
| Pheasants per 100 miles during an August 2006 roadside study | 113.8 |
| Percent above the 10-year average | 75 |
| Estimated moose population in northeastern Minnesota during a January 2006 study | 7,272 |
| State's wild turkey population, as estimate | 30,000 |

— M. Cook

Sources: Minnesota Wildlife 2005-2006, [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#); [Minnesota Ornithologists' Union](#); [The Raptor Center](#); [Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife](#).

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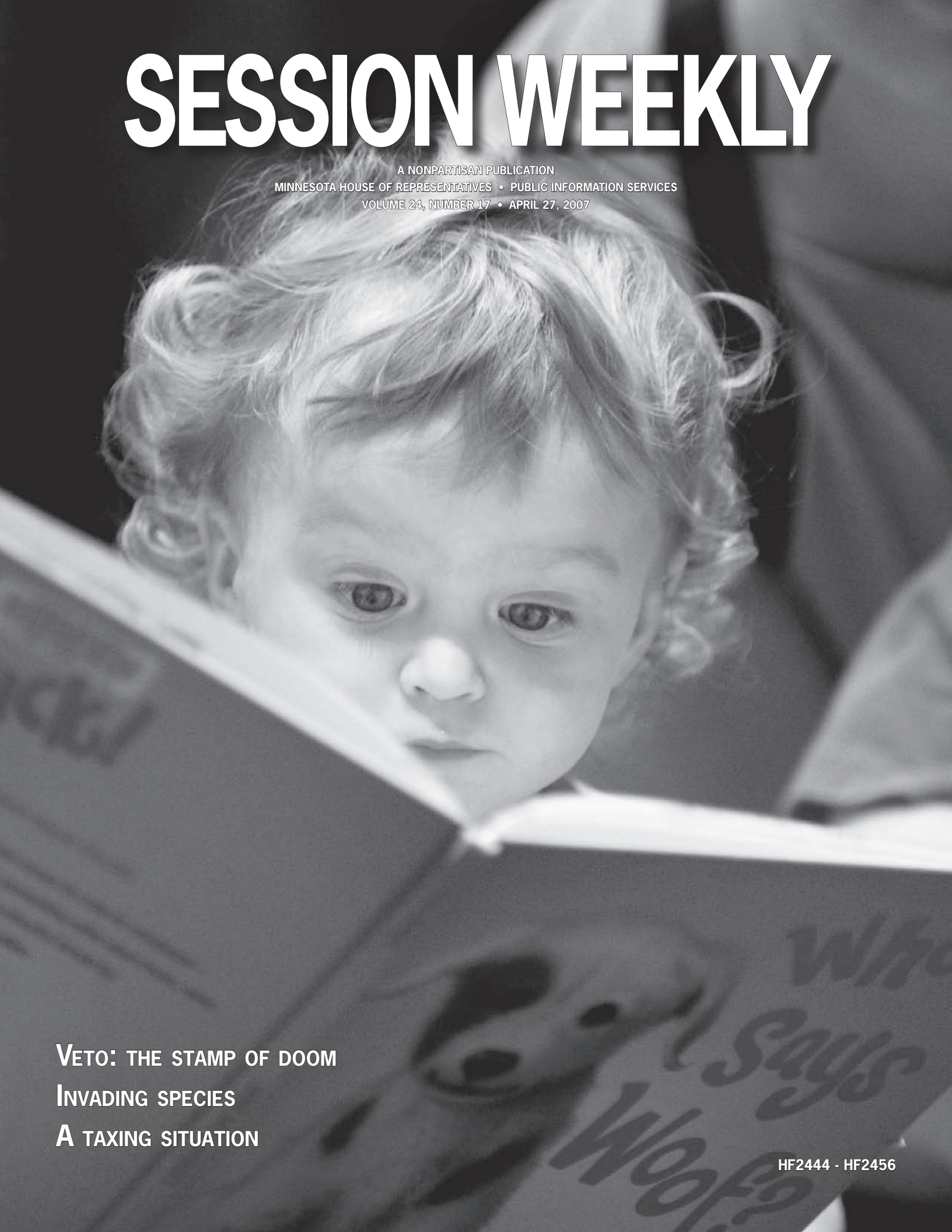
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SESSION WEEKLY

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VETO: THE STAMP OF DOOM
INVADING SPECIES
A TAXING SITUATION

HF2444 - HF2456

SESSION WEEKLY

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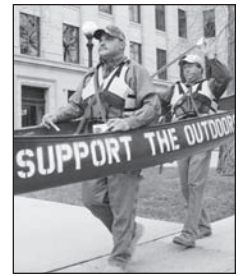
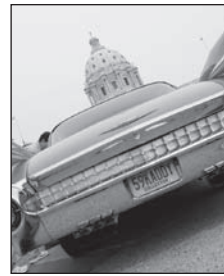
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On the cover: Casey Clare McLaughlin listens as Rep. Brita Sailer reads "Who Says Woof?" during the annual read-a-thon in the Capitol Rotunda April 25.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Veto: the stamp of doom

A brief history of the Legislature's most dreaded four-letter word

By Nick Busse

This is where the session gets interesting. With the May 21 constitutional adjournment deadline looming, legislators could still have their toughest work ahead of them. Following a week of marathon floor sessions marked by long and sometimes arduous debates, House and Senate members sat down together in conference committees this week in hopes of hammering out agreements on a series of omnibus finance bills that together comprise the state budget.

Tasked with working out compromises between House and Senate versions of bills, conference committees can be long and complicated affairs. In the days and weeks to come, legislators will have to barter, negotiate, bargain and bicker with each other to get their bills in order before they can finally be whisked away to the governor's desk for signature.

Once they get there, however, many of them are likely to be vetoed.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has vowed not to sign any budget bill that would result in a tax increase — which, this year, is just about all of them. Moreover, despite having warned DFL legislators against things like tuition breaks for illegal immigrants and domestic partner benefits for gay and lesbian state employees — both of which are tucked into budget bills this year — the governor and the Legislature appear to be on a collision course.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) has been sounding the alarm.

"I would tell you that there is no way that this bill is going to be signed by the governor," Seifert proclaimed during an April 19 floor debate of the omnibus state government finance bill. "Please, at some point, acknowledge that there is a governor — that there needs to be compromise, there

needs to be common sense — and stop living in fantasyland."

[House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) acknowledges the governor's existence, but has no intention of serving as a "rubber stamp" for him.

"Members, we're the House of Representatives. We don't live in a monarchy where, when the governor says 'jump,' we say 'how high.' It's our responsibility to actually put our own budget together," Sertich said.

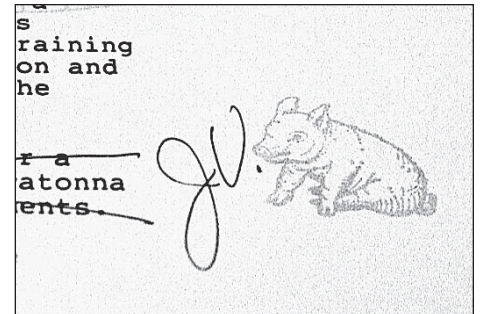
Executive privilege

The veto — the power of the governor to reject bills passed by the Legislature — has been used sparingly thus far by Pawlenty, who for the first four years of his administration has enjoyed the support of a Republican-controlled House to counterbalance the DFL-controlled Senate.

This year, however, he doesn't have that luxury. DFLers now hold an 85-49 majority in the House and 44-23 majority in the Senate — just

five House members and one senator shy of the two-thirds majority required to override a veto.

The last time Minnesota saw its legislative and executive branches controlled by two different parties was during the administration



FILE PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Gov. Jesse Ventura used this pig stamp to veto items in bills he considered pork.

of Gov. Arne Carlson. During his two terms in office from 1991-1999, Carlson, a Republican, exercised his veto power 179 times — more than the previous 11 governors combined. For comparison, in his first four years in office, Pawlenty vetoed just 16 bills.

At one point, Carlson's staff was so busy preparing the governor's veto statements that they hung a banner in their office reading "veto command center." [Former House Speaker Bob Vanasek](#) (DFL-New Prague), who served as speaker during part of Carlson's first term, said Carlson used the veto differently than other governors.

"I was there when Al Quie was governor with a DFL Legislature, and his number of vetoes was far fewer than what Governor Carlson employed. So, I think it was a different way of viewing his veto power. And he was much more aggressive, obviously, in using it than his predecessors," Vanasek said.

Bernie Omann, a former House member who also served as Carlson's chief of staff, said Carlson used the veto as a tool of negotiation.

"It's all a part of the negotiations process, at the end of the day."

Omann said that Carlson generally tried to warn legislators ahead of time when he intended to veto a bill, so there were few surprises. And while a standoff between the governor and the Legislature may look

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Surrounded by commissioners and legislators, Gov. Tim Pawlenty brings the veto stamp down on a 2005 bill that included an increase in the state gas tax.

First Reading continued from page 3

chaotic to the public, Omann described the communication between the governor's office and the Legislature as "continuous."

"It's clearly a shared governance, and it's not complicated if there's communication. It gets complicated when communication breaks down."

Negotiations

Of course, a gubernatorial veto does not necessarily ensure that a bill cannot become law. A vote of two-thirds of the members of both the House and Senate can override a veto.

Such overrides are rare, however. Vetoes have been overridden only 13 times since 1939, with all but five of the overrides occurring during the administration of former Gov. Jesse Ventura, who was not attached to either of the state's two major political parties.

(Ventura ran as an Reform Party candidate, later joining the Independence Party of Minnesota.)

Currently, the Republican minorities in both the House and Senate have some authority, in that they have the power to sustain the governor's veto. Despite this, Omann and Vanasek both say that the minority party has little direct power to influence negotiations.

"I assume that they would be

involved in negotiations, but the real power is between the majority leadership and the governor," Vanasek said.

According to Vanasek, a legislator who votes "no" on a bill would generally vote to sustain a veto; however, he added that making significant changes to a bill in conference committee could potentially change how a legislator votes — especially as session draws to a close.

The last time Minnesota saw its legislative and executive branches controlled by two different parties was during the administration of Gov. Arne Carlson. During his two terms in office from 1991-1999, Carlson, a Republican, exercised his veto power 179 times — more than the previous 11 governors combined. For comparison, in his first four years in office, Pawlenty vetoed just 16 bills.

"When you get to the end of the session, legislators are going to want to go home on time. And if you do have a situation where the governor does veto one or more of the major bills, and there is a vote on an override, I think there will be some pressure to vote to override in order to get the work of the session done," he said.

How will the end of this session play out? Vanasek and Omann are cautiously optimistic.

"I think it's been extremely civil, in the public discourse, between the Legislature and the governor. I can remember situations where things were a little more stressed than they currently are today. I think everybody's been very respectful of each other during this process. ... It's just going to be a matter of putting things together at the end of the day," Omann said.

Vanasek said the governor and legislative leaders need to recognize each other's authority.

"I think it's always helpful when both sides realize they are equal branches, and one side does not perceive themselves as dominant over the other. I think that's when you get into trouble." 🐼

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held April 19-26 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Commissioners can act as consultants

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The [Board of Animal Health](#) consists of five members appointed by the governor, three of whom are livestock producers and two who are practicing veterinarians. A new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 20 allows for the commissioners of agriculture, natural resources and health to serve as consultants to the board.

The board is the state's official animal disease control and eradication agency and was created to protect the health of the state's domestic animals.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton) and [Sen. Joe Gimse](#) (R-Willmar), the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF878*/SF1263/CH19](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

Ag, Veterans bill gets review

At first glance, there seems to be more than an \$8 million gap between the House and Senate 2008-09 General Fund spending proposals for agriculture and veterans programming. But a closer look shows there is little difference between what each of the two bodies would like to ultimately see as the final omnibus agriculture and veterans finance bill. The difference could be in how one-time money is accounted for by each body.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), [HF2227](#) would include funding for the governor's Next Generation Bioenergy Initiative and programs to support veterans, especially important as the state prepares for the expected late-summer return of more than 2,500 National Guard members, who are currently deployed.

The House would like to spend \$175 million over the biennium — about \$750,000 more than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's target — for the departments of Veterans Affairs, Military

Affairs, Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.

As conferees reviewed the side-by-side comparisons, several House provisions came under Senate scrutiny.

Some provisions, including one from [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault) calling for \$80,000 in the first year of the biennium for suicide prevention and psychological support for veterans, came too late in the process to be included in the original Senate companion bill.

Testimony was taken on other House provisions, including proposals for:

- funding for participation of the state's World War II veterans at the dedication of the new World War II memorial in June;
- a residential antimicrobial pesticide applicator license study; and
- a statewide waste pesticide collection program.

A bill that was nearly an all-nighter in a House committee earlier this session had a contentious discussion in the conference committee. The House provision relates to the practice of animal husbandry, which includes animal chiropractic and massage, artificial insemination, trimming hooves and making horseshoes. The Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine would like statutes changed regarding training for these practitioners. Supporters said the procedures should be left to those that are trained, including veterinarians. Others point to the shortage of veterinarians in the state, and that the provision would make it more difficult for farmers to have procedures completed on their animals in a timely manner.

Next Generation and biofuels initiatives were being worked out as well. While the House and Senate provisions are on the same track, some House provisions in these areas are included in other omnibus bills.

— L. SCHUTZ

BONDING

Bonding report approved

After just three meetings, the Capital Investment Finance Conference Committee approved its [report](#) April 25.

Sponsored by [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), the report contains language from both the Senate and the House omnibus bills, [HF886](#) and [SF2157](#).

The agreement totals nearly \$334.1 million.

The original omnibus House and Senate bills were \$255 million and \$285.1 million, respectively. Some conferees were concerned about the higher target.

"It's hard to explain how this is a compromise when the total is over the target (amount)," said [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover).

Hausman said the new total is not so much a compromise as it is a new target altogether for the committee.

Included in the report is \$164 million in one-time money from the state's General Fund and \$140.2 million in bonded money. An additional \$33.4 million will be provided from the state's trunk highway fund.

Some appropriations include:

- \$52.7 million for Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement that will go to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities;
- \$40 million for design and construction of the Central Corridor Transitway between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul;
- \$37 million for a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, which would be used by the [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#) mens and womens hockey programs;
- \$30 million for the Red Lake School District to renovate the high school and middle school to provide classrooms and related facilities for technology, vocational, physical and community education among other needed improvements;
- \$12.7 million for exterior repair of the Department of Transportation Building in St. Paul;
- \$2.5 million for a forensic crime lab in Anoka County;
- \$2 million for the state's share of a high-speed rail line between St. Paul and Chicago;
- \$1.3 million to the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board to construct siphons, a conveyance system and other improvements to accommodate water level and outflow control of the water level in the Canisteo mine pit in Itasca County; and
- \$200,000 to construct a veteran's memorial in Eden Prairie.

— S. HEGMAN

CRIME

Compensation differences

Conferees have begun to do the time to agree on funding that would address crime-related issues.

Chaired by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), sponsors of [HF829](#)*/[SF1992](#), the 10-member Public Safety Finance Conference Committee plans to receive budget targets by the end of the week, when it will begin to vote on what appropriations and policies will remain in the bill.

The House has proposed \$1.89 billion in appropriations, while the Senate is at nearly \$1.88 billion. One of the main differences is how each chamber addresses compensation.

The House proposes a salary increase for all departments covered in the bill at 2 percent, except for the Department of Corrections, which is set at 4.5 percent. The Senate proposes an across the board increase of 3.25 percent, with an exception for judges, who would get a 5 percent increase.

The House budget includes savings that would come from opening new drug courts and implementing more reentry programs. Some senators are concerned that these projections may not be very reliable and the savings may not appear.

Paymar, who believes the courts and programs will save the state money, provided material that had been previously submitted to the House Public Safety Finance Division attesting to the projected savings from these initiatives.

"If we don't have a savings or fiscal impact, then why are we funding these drug courts? Why are we funding reentry programs? It makes no sense to me," he said.

No action was taken by the committee on either issue.

On the policy side, a working group, chaired by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), met to discuss the bill's policy provisions and prepare recommendations for the full conference committee.

At its first meeting April 24, there was discussion — but no resolution — about a provision that would amend the statute defining criminal vehicular operation. In the Senate language, someone would be guilty if "the driver had actual knowledge that the motor vehicle was defectively maintained and the injury or death was caused by the defective maintenance."

[Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield) said this language was drafted because of an incident involving someone driving a trailer that was unsafe. The driver was cited for driving without a safety hitch, yet he continued to pull the trailer. The trailer eventually released and killed two people.

Mullery said the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee decided to remove the provision from the bill. There was concern

about those who may have intended to get their cars fixed, but because of money or time constraints had not gotten the work done. This provision would throw too wide of a net, Mullery said.

[Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), however, saw it differently.

"We always consider driving to be a right and not a privilege in this state because of the dire consequences that can happen," she said. "If a car is not maintained, the driver is putting people in severe danger. People have been killed because of that."

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Education conference committee

The E-12 Education Finance Conference Committee started off with what some called a good omen by aligning targets to \$950 million over current base funding on April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) calls for \$13.94 billion in spending. The Senate version, [SF2095](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), calls for \$13.92 billion in spending.

The House bill spreads funding over a greater range of E-12 education programming than does the Senate bill, which looks to eliminate the special education cross subsidy and restore the annual growth factor of 4.6 percent for special education that was eliminated in 2003.

The monetary differences in bill appropriations are close; however, when and where the money goes varies:

- the House proposes increasing the basic funding formula by \$441 million, a 3 percent increase in each year of the biennium, the Senate \$292 million or 2 percent in each year;
- the House proposes spending \$1.3 billion on special education and the Senate \$1.7 billion for the biennium. The Senate puts \$361 million toward a regular increase for the biennium and \$123 million for the current fiscal year. The House put \$65 million toward a regular increase for the biennium, but no increase for 2007;
- the House increases Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and College in Schools funding by \$16.3 million for the biennium; the Senate has no increase;
- the House allocates \$8.7 million for the 21st century high schools program for the biennium; the Senate has no allocation;
- neither bill directs funding towards the governor's 4R high schools program;

- the House allocates one-time funding of \$29.1 million for school technology in fiscal year 2009; the Senate has no such funding because all of its one-time appropriations are in SF2190;
- the House includes \$35.6 million for libraries and the Senate \$25.6 million for the biennium;
- the House has \$40.2 million for Head Start and the Senate \$38.2 million for the biennium;
- the House allocates \$1.25 million each year for the early childhood scholarship demonstration project, the Senate \$53.8 million in fiscal year 2009; and
- the House has \$94 million for fiscal year 2009 and beyond for voluntary all-day kindergarten; the Senate has no funding allocation.

— S. HARDING

ENERGY

Wind power incentive extended

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law allows an individual whose application was lost in the mail to take advantage of a state renewable energy production incentive program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Terry Morrow](#) (DFL-St. Peter) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), the law is effective April 21, 2007.

According to Morrow, the law was drafted for Dave Arnold, CEO of Arnold Wind Farm — which consists of a single 1.5 megawatt wind turbine in southwest Minnesota. Arnold said his turbine met all the necessary criteria to take advantage of the state's wind energy production incentive, but that his application for the program was lost by the U.S. Post Office and returned to him after the application deadline had expired.

"This legislation simply extends the cutoff date for the receipt of the application," Arnold told a House division.

The law applies only to someone who filed their original application prior to March 1, 2005, but has not received approval. The new deadline is July 31, 2007. Arnold is the only known person to whom the law applies.

[HF472](#)*/[SF239](#)/CH20

— N. BUSSE

ENVIRONMENT

Dedicated funding bill approved

A bill that would raise the state's sales tax to create dedicated funding for the environment and the arts cleared its first committee hurdle



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Leon Iron Moccasin, from Osseo, left, and Jim Poulter, from St. Louis Park “canoe” around the Capitol grounds April 24 in support of money for Clean Water Legacy Act programs. Funding is provided in the omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill, awaiting conference committee action.

in the House April 25.

[HF2285](#), sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), would propose a constitutional amendment to raise the state’s sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent until 2034. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill and sent it to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

If approved by voters in the 2008 general election, the amendment would generate approximately \$281.6 million in new revenue over 25 years, to be divvied up as follows:

- 25 percent for fish and wildlife habitat;
- 25 percent for clean waters;
- 15 percent for parks and trails;
- 15 percent for drinking water protection;
- 10 percent for arts and cultural heritage; and
- 10 percent for the Legislature to appropriate at its discretion for the purposes listed above.

Sertich and others said the bill is necessary to address a crisis in environmental funding. Although similar measures have been brought forward unsuccessfully several times in the past, Sertich is confident that the Legislature will pass it this year and that voters will approve it.

“We could talk a lot about the last 10 years, but I’m really looking forward to the next 25 years,” he said.

During an April 24 hearing, numerous outdoor enthusiasts and conservation advocates pleaded for passage of the bill. No one testified in opposition; however,

when pressed by repeated questioning from [Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings), many testifiers expressed indifference toward the arts and cultural heritage portion of the bill — a provision that McNamara and other Republicans oppose.

“People are not dumb. They know we are not in a crisis to fund arts and humanities,” said [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar), who tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by removing the arts and heritage funding. He added that voters were less likely to approve dedicated funding if arts were included.

— N. BUSSE

E-waste bill passed

A bill that aims to solve the state’s e-waste problem by establishing a system to recycle old TVs and other unwanted electronics devices was passed 112-21 by the House April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), [HF854*/SF235](#) would force consumer electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle an amount of devices proportional to the weight they sold during the previous year. The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the sponsor.

Under the bill, manufacturers would be required to collect an amount of devices equal to 80 percent of the weight of products sold during the previous year — except for the first year, in which the requirement would be 60 percent. Devices collected outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area would count for 1.5 times their actual weight.

In addition, manufacturers would have to pay a base fee of \$2,500 per year (\$5,000 in the first year), plus a variable fee ranging from 30 cents to 50 cents per pound of product for each pound if they fall short of their target. Revenues from the fees would be used to fund recycling programs outside the 11-county metro area.

Sailer said the bill uses a “manufacturers’ responsibility” approach to recycling e-waste, and that it would apply only to video display devices sold to households, not businesses. Noting that the state’s 2006 ban on disposal of such devices via the normal solid waste stream has resulted in illegal dumping in many counties, she said the bill is long overdue.

“We’ve been working on [the bill] for five years, and it’s time to move ahead,” Sailer said.

[Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by lowering the collection requirement to 33 percent — a goal he characterized as “something that’s achievable, rather than something that’s ridiculous.” He said the bill would send electronics prices skyrocketing.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) said the bill ignores the role of personal responsibility in the relationship between consumers and manufacturers, arguing that consumers should be responsible for recycling their own property.

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

Sesquicentennial funding

A commission organized to plan the state’s 150th birthday party next year would be authorized to accept donations to help fund the celebration, under a bill passed 121-10 by the House April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), [HF2135/SF1949*](#) would authorize the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission to directly accept gifts, grants and other donations to commemorate the sesquicentennial. It would also permit the commission to enter into contracts and award grants. Donations are now directed to the state’s General Fund.

The 17-member commission was created in 2005 by the Legislature to plan “celebratory activities and public engagement in every county in the state of Minnesota.” The commission would be permitted to meet by telephone or other electronic means if certain conditions are met.

A successful amendment offered by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) would

“encourage all activities celebrating the sesquicentennial to be as energy efficient as practicable.”

The amendment doesn't require the commission to be energy-efficient nor does it prescribe penalties for not complying, said [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria). “This is pointless, it's useless, it's a waste of our time.”

As amended, the bill now returns to the Senate, which passed the original version 65-0 April 18.

— P. OSTBERG

GREATER MINNESOTA

Replacing town road signs

The state could get a hefty return on a transportation safety investment.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF562](#) would appropriate \$600,000 to the town road sign replacement program, making the state eligible for a \$3 million federal grant.

Approved April 24 by the House Finance Committee, the bill awaits action by the House Ways and Means Committee.

Money for the program is also included the omnibus transportation finance bill ([HF946](#)), sponsored by Lieder.

For the state to be eligible to receive the federal dollars, Kent Sulem, attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships, said that the appropriation is needed to meet the required 80-20 split.

The Senate appropriates \$2.5 million in [SF2190](#), that body's omnibus one-time appropriations bill, sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul). Approved by the Senate, the bill awaits House action.

Reestablished by the 2005 Legislature, the program, in part, includes inventorying county and town road signs, evaluating their condition, potentially replacing signs and establishing an ongoing maintenance program. Because of better materials, newer signs are expected to last 15 to 20 years.

However, the program is not effective until there is an appropriation from state or federal funds.

The House bill originally sought \$2 million, but a change in budget targets reduced the amount to \$600,000, Lieder said.

The remaining \$1.4 million of the original request would have been used to entice more federal dollars, which Sulem said could be crucial now that [U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar](#) (D-Minn.) chairs the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives.

[U.S. Rep. Tim Walz](#) (D-Minn.) has submitted a supplemental \$9 million request

for the program, Sulem said. “If we were to receive that money, we'd need an additional \$1.8 million in match.”

— M. COOK

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A \$100 million spread

Members of the Health and Human Services Finance Conference Committee avoided contentious conversation during the first two meetings April 24 and 25. Instead, committee members focused on similarities between the bills and agreed on dozens of provisions related to licensing, child care, mental health and public health.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF297/SF2171](#)* would provide funding for health care, nursing homes, mental health, public health, child care and more.

The bills vary significantly in key aspects, however. The House version would spend more than \$10 billion in General Fund dollars over the biennium. It includes a \$99 million health care proposal known as “Cover all Kids,” that is absent in the Senate bill. The House also includes a multitude of mental health provisions and public health initiatives, such as lead abatement standards, studies and health tracking and monitoring, not included in the Senate's proposal.

The bills' total spending differs by about \$100 million.

Adopted provisions include:

- Senate language for the early hearing detection and intervention act — an initiative of [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) — which would require hospitals to develop comprehensive hearing screening programs and report screening results to parents and the Department of Health;
- language to eliminate grant reductions for family planning services, which provide reproductive health care;
- an increase in child care assistance eligibility to 250 percent of federal poverty guidelines;
- changes to work requirements under the Minnesota Family Investment Program; and
- Senate language for family stabilization services, which is designed for MFIP recipients at risk of long-term welfare dependency.

The committee also heard testimony on HealthMatch, a computer system designed to automate eligibility for Minnesota's health care programs. Its implementation has been delayed several times, and legislators had heard different estimates on how long it

would take Department of Human Services to integrate new health care programs, should any be passed this year.

The Senate gave the department six months; the House gave them eight.

Department staff warned members that the timetable would vary based on various factors, but said they would make every effort to stick to the five months originally forecasted.

— M. SIMPSON

Task force extension

The Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force would continue to operate another four years, under a bill passed 124-8 by the House April 23.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester), [HF1981](#) would extend the task force expiration date from June 30, 2007, to June 30, 2011. The task force consists of 15 members from maternal and child health services and community health boards, as well as others interested in health issues as they relate to mothers and children.

According to the Department of Health Web site, the task force was created by the Legislature in 1982 to advise the health commissioner on the health care needs of mothers and children, the frequency and types of use of the department programs related to maternal and child health, and program guidelines and criteria to provide related programs to low-income populations and high-risk persons. The task force also administers the federal maternal and child health block grant in Minnesota.

The bill now awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the Senate sponsor.

— P. OSTBERG

HOUSING

Mortgage broker regulations

Signed
by
the
governor

It almost goes without saying that to get into a new home, you need to get a loan.

There's no guarantee, however, that everyone will qualify for a loan, or that lenders will offer a good deal.

To protect the many Minnesotans looking into new or refinanced mortgage loans, a new law regulates certain practices of mortgage brokers and lenders.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the law prohibits a mortgage broker or lender from making or arranging a loan without verifying the borrower's ability to pay back the money,

also taking into account insurance, taxes and interest. It also requires the lender to inform the borrower of a first-lien mortgage loan that the borrower will also have to pay taxes and insurance.

The law prohibits the practice of “churning,” which is when a lender arranges or provides a new loan to finance an existing loan when the new loan does not benefit the borrower.

Signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on April 20, the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1004](#)*/[SF809](#)/CH18

— C. GREEN

INDUSTRY

Penalty waived

Truckers hauling biofuels could have a misdemeanor penalty waived for not hauling the state required diesel-biodiesel blend, under a bill awaiting gubernatorial action.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), [HF1300/SF1069](#)* would give the commissioner of commerce the ability to grant a temporary exemption from the blending requirements if the supply is insufficient to meet state law requirements.

It was approved 132-0 by the House April 23, five days after it was approved 64-1 by the Senate.

Juhnke said that a situation occurred last year where those hauling fuels were unable to obtain the required blended amount because a terminal wasn't operating properly. Although incidents at pipelines and refineries are “few and far between,” he said there is still a risk for those hauling the goods to be violating the law.

Under the bill, terminal operators would be required to notify the director of the [Weights and Measures Division](#) of the [Department of Commerce](#) when “regular grade gasoline, No. 1 diesel, No. 3 diesel, kerosene, heating oil, ethanol, and biodiesel are physically not available for sale to licensed distributors.”

Also, the commissioner would be required to work with the agriculture commissioner, biodiesel producers, ethanol producers, pipeline operators and terminal operators to ensure that biodiesel and ethanol are available for blending at pipeline and refinery terminals.

— P. OSTBERG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County recorder appointment

When [HF1193/SF1098](#)* was debated on the House floor, [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) said it was another instance of

SPECIAL ADDRESS

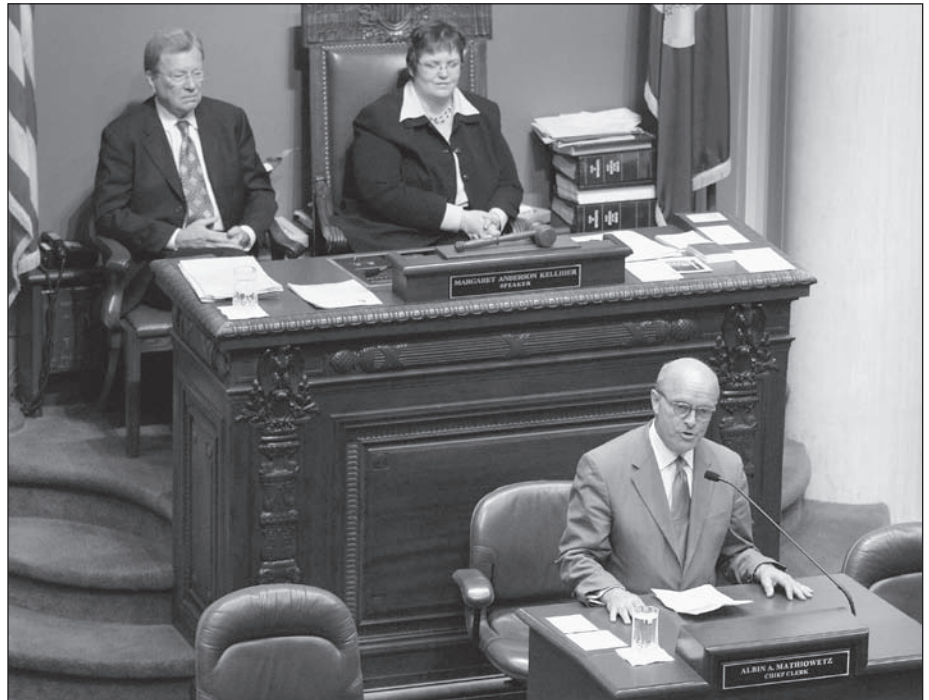


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Senate President James Metzen listen to an address by Swedish Ambassador to the United States Gunnar Lund during an April 23 joint convention of the House and Senate.

the Legislature getting rid of elected officials in favor of appointed positions, instead of listening to the voice of the voters.

“We need to stop this trend,” he said.

Awaiting the signature of Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the bill would authorize Beltrami County to appoint someone to the office of recorder, which up to now has been an elected position. This change would also be subject to an 80 percent vote by the county board and a reverse referendum. The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), said that there was already unanimous support from board members, and that the bill would allow the current officeholder to complete her term before the new appointment is made.

Before being approved by the House 87-23 on April 23, [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) both spoke of how a similar law had helped their constituents, while [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) said, “the last time I checked, county recorders are not making policy.” This bill is not an anti-local control issue, he said.

Also sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), the bill was passed 54-0 by the Senate April 16.

— C. GREEN

Charter commission expense limits

The amount of money allocated to a charter commission for expenses has not changed since 1961.

Approved 106-26 by the House April 23, [HF1105/SF1017](#)*, would provide these commissions with more funds.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the bill would raise the maximum amount of funds available from \$1,500 to \$5,000 for a city of the second, third or fourth class. These cities have populations of less than 100,000. This would give commissions the resources to serve more effectively, Laine said.

Passed by the Senate 56-0 on April 16, the bill now awaits approval from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

— C. GREEN

St. Louis County appointment

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The [St. Louis County Board of Commissioners](#) could now have an easier time filling its civil service director position.

Revising current statute, a new law allows the board to appoint the director to serve in unclassified service.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Visitors check out a 1959 Cadillac owned by John Eisele during the Minnesota Street Rod Association's annual visit to the Capitol on April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the law eliminates the previous detailed appointment process, which included the creation of an examination committee.

The law was signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on April 20, and took effect one day later.

[HF1432/SF1133*/CH17](#)

— C. GREEN

Conferees agreed April 25 on language that is in both bills, including a change whereby the vehicle registration tax would no longer be capped at \$189 for the first year and \$99 thereafter, as was enacted during Gov. Jesse Ventura's administration.

Also agreed upon is a 75-cent increase in the cost of filing for a vehicle title, driver's license, state identification card and motorized bicycle operator's permit.

Agreement could not be reached on a proposed wheelage tax, whereby counties could levy \$20 annually on each motor vehicle subject to annual registration domiciled in the county.

The House plan would exempt motorcycles, trucks and tractors in excess of 26,000 pounds. Supporters said this would help businesses that are headquartered in one place but have a fleet in many different counties. Opponents claim the exemption sends the wrong message to all other owners that must pay the fee.

A proposed gas tax increase is yet to be resolved. The Senate plan calls for a 10-cent gas tax increase beginning on July 1, 2007; the House plan calls for a 5-cent increase on that date and another 5-cent increase one year later. Additionally, the Senate plan would index the increase based on the consumer price index in ensuing years.

Other differences include the imposition of a local transportation sales tax, dedication of motor vehicle sales tax revenue and the amount of bonding in the next decade. The House plan calls for \$100 million in bonding for each of the next 10 years for trunk highway improvements; the Senate plan, \$200 million per year.

— M. COOK

TRANSPORTATION

Conference group slowly accelerating

Conferees trying to safely merge the differences between the House and Senate omnibus transportation finance bills shouldn't have to worry about traffic congestion as they continue to motor along toward an agreement.

After two meetings, conferees are scheduled to meet on Saturday, April 28, in hopes of getting further down the track toward the checkered flag.

Sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), [SF1986](#) totals \$1.48 billion. The nearly \$1.29 billion House proposal ([HF946](#)) is sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston). However, conferees are expected to receive a new target from legislative leaders before the week is out.

Provisions get another green light

A bill that, in part, addresses traffic regulations, vehicle registration, Department of Transportation planning reports, towing authority, railway safety and truck size and weight restrictions received approval April 25 from the House Ways and Means Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1351](#) awaits House floor action.

The bill has no companion; however, some Senate policy provisions have been incorporated into that body's omnibus transportation finance bill ([SF1986](#)).

Among the provisions successfully amended onto the bill by the House Finance Committee April 24 is one where by a responsible authority "may use a design-build method of project development and construction of light rail transit," and another that would permit

the Metropolitan Council to offer discounted bus service passes to certain charitable organizations.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) would require the reopening of the Culkin rest area along Interstate 35. He said it would cost about \$7,000 to reopen the area and \$116,000 per year to operate — costs to be absorbed by [MnDOT](#).

The rest area was closed by the department in October 2005 as a cost-saving measure. It is one of three located within a 50-mile stretch of interstate: one is 26 miles south at Kettle River and another is 24 miles north near Spirit Mountain in Duluth.

Hilty and [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) said the rest area, which also has a lake and some trails, was a gift to the state from the Culkin family with the understanding it would remain open.

The bill also calls for the department to:

- perform a study of speed limits on local roads;
- look at the state's long-term transportation needs, including highways, bridges and transit, and identify the strategies to meet those needs; and
- undertake state rail inspections and create a state rail inspector position.

Concern was voiced about the extended vehicle weight limit permits and load restrictions allowed for in the bill and the effect this would have on driving surfaces.

As amended, the bill allows road authorities to issue permits for heavier weight loads for six- and seven-axle vehicles carrying raw or unprocessed agricultural products for a fee. Other haulers, such as those carrying forest products, can already go to heavier weights.

The truck weight provisions would only be effective if the gas tax increase, provided for in the omnibus transportation finance bills, is enacted. "It simply acknowledges that we're going to have additional wear and tear on the roads and for that reason we ought to have some additional funding in place for that," Hornstein said.

— M. Cook



Fiscal restraint

Conference committee members may find themselves meeting during meal time.

Neither [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston) nor [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), co-chairs of the Transportation Finance Conference Committee, are fans of evening

LATE ACTION

Smoking ban still fuming

Try as they might, opponents were unable to snuff out passage of a potential statewide smoking ban.

After nearly eight hours of debate on April 26 and 37 amendments, the bill passed 85-45 on a vote that was not along party lines.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), [HF305/SF238*](#) would prohibit smoking in public places, including all places of employment, public meetings and public transit.

As amended, the bill returns to the Senate, which passed its version 41-24 on March 27. A conference committee is expected to be needed to work out the differences.

Huntley said the bill is about protecting workers, who he said are at greater risk of heart disease, cancer and other ailments because of exposure to secondhand smoke.

"Five hundred and eighty Minnesotans die from secondhand smoke each year," he said. "There is no risk-free level of exposure, and separating smokers and non-smokers, cleaning the air and ventilation systems cannot remove the dangers."

Opponents didn't contest the health issues, but they did disagree with claims made by Huntley and [Rep. Dan Severson](#)

(R-Sauk Rapids), the lead Republican on the bill, that the net impact of a ban on businesses is negligible.

"Rep. Severson, you keep saying that there's no economic impact," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague). "If that's so, it negates your bill. Your bill is based on a differential ... that says we need a ban that includes everyone. If there is no economic impact then you don't need this bill."

Several members tried to chip away at the bill's scope by offering amendments that would have excused certain groups from the ban, including:

- taconite miners;
- bars without full kitchens;
- cities that border state lines;
- townships if they so choose; and
- certain union employees.

A few amendments passed, including one offered by [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake) that would exempt veterans in rest camps, and one from [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) that applies to farmhands.

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) tried to reincorporate language that would permit businesses with approved ventilation systems to allow smoking. His amendment failed. The bill currently provides an exemption to bars with ventilated smoking rooms, which are closed from employees, so long as their local government approves it.

— M. SIMPSON

meetings, so they agreed most meetings would be scheduled for 3 p.m. in room 5 of the State Office Building.

"If we do go a little bit later and there is some food provided, it's always been the tradition that wherever the conference committee is held that that chamber would buy," Murphy quipped.

As laughter ensued, Lieder quickly responded that "We will never be meeting at lunch or dinnertime."

Generally, House committees meet in the building; Senate meetings are in the State Capitol.

— M. Cook

No opposition, no problem

DFL members of the House Finance Committee were in luck April 26, when none of the committee's 13 Republican members showed up for a hearing on four bills. It made passing them easy.

[Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), chairman of the committee, had originally intended to wait for his Republican colleagues, who were apparently having breakfast with Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Carlson waited approximately a half-hour before soliciting the advice of his fellow DFLers, who suggested the committee move ahead with voting on the bills.

That was fine with [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton), who was there to present a pair of bills relating to renewable energy. Peterson began presenting his first bill to the committee; however, when informed that no Republican members were present in the room, he announced, to much laughter all around, "I'm finished explaining the bill."

Carlson said Republican members would have a chance to debate the bills and present any amendments in the House Ways and Means Committee, where the bills are headed next.

— N. BUSSE

An unhealthy split

The \$10 billion bill meets with Republican protests

By MIA SIMPSON

One of the lead proposals in the omnibus health care and human services finance bill was under attack for much of the April 20 House floor debate.

Republican members called the health care provision, known as “Cover all Kids,” unaffordable and unsustainable, an assessment they also gave to the bill as a whole.

“You can’t tax enough to make these promises come true,” said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague).

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF297/SF2171](#)* would spend about \$10 billion of General Fund money in the 2008-09 biennium for health care, mental health and public health initiatives, nursing homes, welfare reforms, child care and dozens of miscellaneous items. The bill passed 86-45 in the wee hours of April 21. The Senate passed the measure 42-23 March 29.

The legislation now sits in conference committee.

From kids to seniors

The “Cover all Kids” provision, would cost \$99 million in the next biennium and \$373 million in fiscal years 2010-11. Its sponsor, [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), insisted the proposal would ensure presumptive eligibility, therefore guaranteeing that every child who enters a hospital has his or her care paid.

“This doesn’t tinker around the edges,” Thissen said. “This gets the job done.”

The omnibus bill also tries to get the job done for nursing homes. The bill calls for a 3 percent payment increase in each of the next two fiscal years, at a cost of \$138 million. Nursing homes would also have their funding reapportioned statewide in 2010 and beyond, thus decreasing the reimbursement gap

between urban and rural facilities.

“It is a welcome rain after a very long drought,” [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley) said.

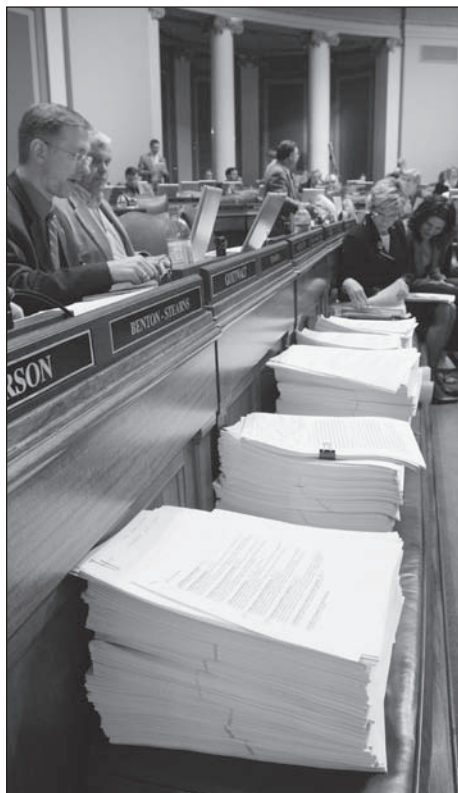


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The piles of amendments to the omnibus health care and human services finance bill foretell the 11-hour debate on the House floor April 20-21.

A Quick Look SF2171

Focus: Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Veterans Home Board and other health-related boards.

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$10 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| “Cover all Kids” | \$10 mil. |
| Nursing home payments | \$138 mil. |
| Mental health | \$45 mil. |
| Medical Assistance asset expansion ... | \$28 mil. |
| County assistance | \$38 mil. |
| Disability waivers/programs | \$12.2 mil. |
| Child care | \$18 mil. |
| Veterans Home Board | \$14.8 mil. |

Selected policy provisions:

- 125 plans to allow employees to buy health care with pre-tax dollars
- [HF1](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), to provide insurance for all Minnesota children
- health care pilots for medical homes, care coordination, treatment incentives and expanded coverage
- e-Health to establish interoperable electronic health records
- new environmental studies and tracking of toxins
- expanded benefits set for mental health treatment
- buy down waiting lists for child care subsidies and disability programs
- adjustments in work requirements for MFIP recipients

Republican members repeatedly failed to affect both areas of spending in the bill — first by attempting to replace “Cover all Kids” provisions with the governor’s health care proposal, and second by reallocating funding given to other programs, including the Minnesota Family Investment Program, to nursing homes.

“There’s a legitimate difference of opinion about taking all that money and putting it toward MFIP when, in fact, it could go toward something else,” [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) said.

Republicans protested many of the proposed changes to the state welfare program. The proposal would reduce work requirements for certain recipients, increase program eligibility



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Thomas Huntley addresses the House during the April 20 debate on the omnibus health care and human services finance bill. The bill passed 86-45, and is now in a conference committee.

from 115 percent to 140 percent and repeal two penalties imposed in 2003.

“This goes in the direction of dependence, not independence,” said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), who successfully added language that would prohibit MFIP participants from using cash assistance for alcohol and cigarettes. “Welfare’s purpose is to eliminate, as far as possible, the need for its own existence. Members, this bill goes in the opposite direction.”

Democrats defended their choices. They said, in the instance of health care, Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s health care proposal, called “Healthy Connections,” doesn’t go far enough.

“The governor’s proposal only covers 14,000 out of more than 77,000 uninsured kids,” Thissen said. “That’s less than one in five.”

DFLers also criticized repeated attempts to move Health Care Access Fund and federal

welfare money into programs for which they claim the money isn’t intended.

“There you go again,” Huntley said. “Taking (money) and moving it to the bottom line.”

Huntley also emphasized the bill’s similarities, particularly in health care, with the governor’s proposal.

Both include the Health Insurance Exchange, which would, in part, allow people to use pre-tax dollars to buy health insurance; QCare, which would establish quality care standards for some chronic conditions; and money for an interoperable electronic health record system.

Also on the hotplate was about \$5 million in funding to family planning programs, which provide, among other things, services to pregnant women seeking abortions.

An amendment offered by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) that would have prohibited state funding for most abortions

failed 68-64.

Other items in the bill include:

- \$45 million for mental health initiatives, including a model benefit set that would expand coverage to mental health care in MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance and General Assistance Medical Care programs;
- aspects of the omnibus housing and public health finance bill, including \$2 million for an environmental health tracking and biomonitoring system — [HF1621](#), sponsored by [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) — that would determine relationships between environmental hazards and disease; and
- aspects of the omnibus early childhood learning finance bill, including a 2 percent rate increase for child care providers.



“There’s a legitimate difference of opinion about taking all that money and putting it toward MFIP when, in fact, it could go toward something else.”

— Rep. Steve Gottwalt

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

State agency funding

Election conveniences and domestic partner benefits included

BY PATTY OSTBERG

House and Senate conferees are meeting to work out differences in what will become the omnibus state government finance bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF953/SF1997](#)* would make several state policy changes and appropriate money for state operations. The House plan calls for \$544.5 million in General Fund spending — \$102.2 million less than the governor's recommendation, but \$23 million more than the Senate recommendation.

The bill, which contained the original House language, was passed 68-64 April 19. The Senate version was approved 42-20 March 24 by that body.

What could have been hours of debate on the House floor April 19 instead came screeching to a halt as the Republican minority offered few amendments to the bill and pulled nearly 70 others.

"There are numerous items in this bill that are wedge issues," said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall). The minority pulled the amendments to avoid prolonged House debate on a bill that "in no way will be signed by the governor," he said.

"We will continue to extend our offer to compromise with the other side of the aisle and the Governor to make these bills and the final product good for all of Minnesota," [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) said.

Agency funding

Under the House plan, state agencies would receive much of their funding needs for staffing and general operational costs. The

bill includes a salary increase of 3.25 percent for state employees in fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

The bill assumes \$104 million in revenue gains from technology carryforward funds, the governor's and House tax compliance initiatives and audit fees. The Department of Revenue would be expected to increase

tax collection, but opponents say the department is not staffed to do so, and therefore the collection target is unattainable.

The Office of Enterprise

Technology would receive \$23.3 million. Of that, the House version would appropriate \$2 million to begin the first phase of an electronic licensing system, but the Senate plan has no money for this. The governor's budget includes \$15 million for the project "to satisfy growing citizen demand for online government services," according to his budget recommendation report. Additional money for the office, in the House plan, includes funding for information technology security, small-agency technology infrastructure and an electronic documents study and report.

The House plan allocates \$51.4 million

A Quick Look SF1997

Focus: Legislature, Governor's office, State Auditor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, Investment Board, Administrative Hearings Office, Office of Enterprise Technology, Department of Administration, Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, Department of Finance, Department of Employee Relations, Department of Revenue, Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, Council on Black Minnesotans, Chicano-Latino Affairs Council, Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Minnesota State Retirement System, Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund, Minneapolis Teachers Retirement, St. Paul Teachers Retirement Fund Association

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$544.5 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| House, Senate and | |
| Legislative Coordinating Commission..... | \$137.4 mil. |
| Governor..... | \$7.4 mil. |
| State Auditor..... | \$18.5 mil. |
| Attorney General..... | \$49 mil. |
| Secretary of State..... | \$13.6 mil. |
| Office of Enterprise Technology..... | \$23.3 mil. |
| Department of Administration..... | \$51.4 mil. |
| Department of Finance..... | \$37.7 mil. |
| Department of Employee Relations..... | \$12.3 mil. |
| Department of Revenue..... | \$245.8 mil. |

Selected policy provisions:

- requires the governor to reduce the number of deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, and other unclassified positions
- creates a Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness
- creates a Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans
- automatic voter registration when applying for a driver's license
- ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter
- establishes procedures for governing management of grants made by state agencies
- gives full compensation to current state employees for losses due to the 2005 state government shutdown
- gives domestic partner health benefits to state employees
- defines best value for state contracts



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Phyllis Kahn, cosponsor of the omnibus state government finance bill, spoke April 19 during the floor debate on the bill that would fund state government. The bill would also provide health insurance benefits to domestic partners of state employees, a provision that the governor has said could place the bill in jeopardy of a veto.

to the Department of Administration and its subdivisions for projects, including \$2.5 million to purchase a Web-enabled real estate management system that would allow state agencies to more efficiently track space needs in state-owned buildings. The governor proposes \$6.7 million for the project; the Senate zero. Other money in the House plan would fund activities to promote and prepare for the 2010 census, the Land Management Information Center and the Office of the State

Archaeologist, and establishment of an Office of Grants Management.

New commissions would be created under the House plan, including the Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. The Senate proposal includes funding for a similar heritage commission.

According to the House bill, the heritage office would “assist state government to

foster an understanding and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity in Minnesota.” The commission on terrorism would advise and make policy recommendations on issues related to homeland security and emergency management.

Policy changes

Domestic partners of state employees would be offered insurance in collective bargaining agreements or plans that also provide state-paid health insurance for spouses of employees, under the bill. A domestic partner would be defined to include a person who has entered into a committed interdependent relationship with another adult where the partners are responsible for each other’s basic common welfare, share a common residence and intend to do so indefinitely, and are not related by blood or adoption that would prohibit marriage. Provision opponents have said the governor would veto the bill if this provision is in the final product.

A number of policy changes regarding elections are included. For example, the bill would allow for automatic voter registration when applying for a driver’s license; lease agreements could be used as forms of identification for Election Day registration; voter registration and active status information would be provided on the Office of the Secretary of State Web site; and ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter would be provided.

One provision would help military personnel serving overseas have a better chance of having their absentee ballot counted.

Currently the process is mail out/mail back, but the bill would provide for the ballot to be e-mailed, with the completed ballot mailed back. The change would also apply to individuals working overseas who claim Minnesota as residency.

The House and Senate would be required to adopt rules requiring committees of the same jurisdictions to meet at coordinating times, and a regular hour for convening daily sessions in both houses. Also under the bill, parking in front of the State Capitol building would be reserved for the public. Currently, the area is reserved for Senate members and some staff during session. 🏛️

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Taxing the rich to give to the poor

Omnibus tax bill is not well received by Republican minority

By SONJA HEGMAN

Minnesota became Sherwood Forest for a day as [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) argued that a provision in the House omnibus tax bill would steal from the rich.

“What we’re talking about here is robbery,” he said in the House Taxes Committee April 24 of the provision what would create a fourth tier tax bracket. “(This bill) takes money from the wealthy and gives it to another group of people.”

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) was not about to be outdone.

“If I’m Robin Hood, I suppose you’re the Sheriff of Nottingham,” he said.

The bill, [HF2362](#), sponsored by House Taxes Committee Chairwoman [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), would create a new top income tax rate of 9 percent for married couples filing joint returns who earn more than \$400,000 a year and for single taxpayers with incomes above \$226,000. The current top rate is 7.85 percent.

A Kohls amendment to delete the new tax rate was opposed in a 17-9 roll call vote. About 20 amendments were presented during the three-hour markup of the bill. Several were adopted before the bill was passed April 24 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee, which approved the measure the next day. It was scheduled to be heard on the House floor April 27. The Senate omnibus tax bill, [SF1024](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), was approved 38-28 by that body March 30.

Though the bill passed out of the taxes committee, during an April 25 House floor session, [Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie), a member of the tax committee, unsuccessfully offered a minority tax report to replace Lenczewski’s majority report.

“Members, let’s get real here today,” Paulsen said. “We’re not leaving session with a tax increase. Let’s get this done right today. It’s really a matter of prioritizing spending. I’m

offering this today so we can at least have this discussion.”

He continued by saying the \$1 billion surplus for the 2008-09 biennium could be used to provide tax relief instead of increasing income taxes by \$452 million with the new tax tier.

“The main issue is property tax relief,” said [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth). “Do you want to vote for huge property tax increases today or wait until Friday to provide relief?”

At the end of January, Marquart opened a property tax hot line to collect comments

from citizens around the state. The line was open for about two months and generated 750 comments via phone or e-mail.

“Haven’t we heard anything from the public? This minority report tells our property owners to take a hike. The plan on (Friday’s floor session) will tell property taxpayers, ‘We hear you. We will provide property tax cuts to you,’” he said.

A second minority report, offered after House Ways and Means Committee approval, included the governor’s tax plan and a return of the state surplus in the form of property tax relief. It was defeated 84-49 April 26 on the House floor.

Property tax relief

The bill would raise an estimated \$452 million over the next two years. That revenue would be used to cut property taxes for 90 percent of Minnesota homeowners, Lenczewski said.

It would also provide state refunds to homeowners whose property taxes exceed 2 percent of their household income. The refunds would range from \$250 to



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

No tax subsidies for the Mall of America expansion are in the House omnibus tax bill. The Senate bill provides tax breaks for the project.

Other provisions in the tax bill

After testimony on more than 300 bills, the omnibus tax bill would also:

- provide a one-time credit of up to \$50,000 for expenditures made to modernize dairy animal operations in the state. The credit would equal 10 percent of expenditures in tax years 2007 through 2012;
- establish a FARMZ program as part of the Job Opportunity Building Zones. This would allow the Department of Employment and Economic Development to transfer existing JOBZ parcels to qualifying farm sites, providing JOBZ benefits for on-farm agricultural processing facilities;
- shield disabled veterans from property taxes, allowing those who are totally disabled to exclude up to \$300,000 of their home's market value from taxation. The benefit would carry over to a spouse after the veteran's death;
- eliminate the provisions that give tax breaks to companies with foreign operations;
- increase the maximum renter's property tax refund by 6 percent, topping out at \$1,500. Income eligibility would increase as well, to \$60,000 from \$50,160;
- establish an annual \$1 million bioscience business grant program, administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development; and
- provide partial or total sales tax exemptions for construction materials used in, and equipment incorporated into, a number of water and wastewater treatment facilities for individual cities. These cities were required to build the facilities to meet environmental standards. The cities may apply for a refund of 50 percent of the tax actually paid on these facilities; however, the city of Harris may apply for a refund of 100 percent of the tax.

\$2,500. Households with annual incomes up to \$150,000 would be eligible for the reimbursement.

Marquart, who sponsored the property tax division report, said it also would strongly link the tax with the ability to pay; addressing what he said is the biggest complaint about the property tax.

Some of the relief would come in the form of increased aid to local governments and school districts, he said, but homeowners in 2008 also would see an actual drop in their property taxes from 2007 amounts.

Lenczewski said property tax relief is the core of the tax bill. She has said raising income taxes on the relatively wealthy would make the state's tax system fairer.

The House bill does not provide tax subsidies to expand the Mall of America in Bloomington and the Thomson West legal publishing complex in Eagan. The Senate bill provides tax breaks to both projects. It would authorize the City of Eagan to create

Tax break proposed for disabled veterans

The House omnibus tax bill includes a provision that would provide a real estate tax break for disabled veterans who are homeowners. The charts below show the effect of the provision on a homestead in the Twin Cities metropolitan area compared to one in Greater Minnesota.

Disabled veteran's homestead (using Metropolitan area average home value and tax rate)

| | | Current Law | Proposed Law |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| 50% Disability rating | Taxable value | \$283,500 | \$183,500 |
| | Net tax | \$3,068 | \$2,016 |
| 70% Disability rating | Taxable value | \$283,500 | \$133,500 |
| | Net tax | \$3,068 | \$1,466 |
| 100% Permanent disability | Taxable value | \$283,500 | \$0 |
| | Net tax | \$3,068 | \$0 |

Disabled veteran's homestead (using Greater Minnesota average home value and tax rate)

| | | Current Law | Proposed Law |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| 50% Disability rating | Taxable value | \$164,100 | \$64,100 |
| | Net tax | \$1,557 | \$667 |
| 70% Disability rating | Taxable value | \$164,100 | \$14,100 |
| | Net tax | \$1,557 | \$147 |
| 100% Permanent disability | Taxable value | \$164,100 | \$0 |
| | Net tax | \$1,557 | \$0 |

Source: House Research Department

a tax increment financing district that could divert property taxes from the Thomson West expansion to pay for streets, parking, sewer, water and other improvements on the site.

Other property tax provisions would:

- provide full or partial valuation exclusion for homesteads of disabled veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or greater;
- reduce the class rate for rental duplexes and triplexes to the same class rate structure that applies to homesteads and single-unit rental properties;
- reduce the property classification rate for qualifying nonprofit community service-oriented organizations, like VFWs and American Legions;
- extend the time for filing property tax refund claims for homeowners and renters by one year;
- allow homestead property owners to pay their property tax in eight equal installments, rather than the current two payments;
- expand eligibility for the senior citizens property tax deferral program;
- establish a seasonal recreational property tax deferral program;
- reinstitute the "this old house" program, which excludes the increase in value due to a new improvement made to an older home for 10 years; and

- require cities with a population of more than 2,500 and counties to prepare and send a supplemental proposed property tax notice under certain circumstances.

Local aids

Over the next two years, the bill would increase state aid to cities, counties and townships.

The local government aid portion would increase by \$60 million in 2008. Modifications to the program would:

- increase the city aid base portion of LGA for Newport, Taylors Falls, Rockville and Browns Valley;
- provide a \$3 per capita LGA payment to towns beginning with aids payable in 2008;
- provide that aid formulas reflect changes in property tax bases caused by utility property valuations and the casino in Mahanomen in a timely fashion;
- increase the appropriation for county program aid by \$24 million for aids payable in 2008, an increase of approximately 11.7 percent over current law;
- provide for an inflation adjustment for city LGA and county program aid appropriations. The size of the adjustment depends on city organizations developing a consensus on the LGA formula in the future.

"What we're talking about here is robbery. (This bill) takes money from the wealthy and gives it to another group of people."

— Rep. Paul Kohls

Funding postsecondary education

Higher education bill includes controversial provision

By CRAIG GREEN AND MIKE COOK

The end of double-digit tuition increases could be on the horizon.

That is the point again repeated by supporters of the omnibus higher education finance bill, which is now in the hands of a 10-member conference committee.

However, some say the bill is on an almost assured crash course with Gov. Tim Pawlenty because of a single provision: the Dream Act.

Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul) indicated at the first gathering April 23 that its conference committee report is expected by early next week.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), HF797 calls for nearly \$3.21 billion in spending for the 2008-09 biennium. Sponsored by Pappas, SF1989 is about \$107.7 million less. The governor's recommendation is about \$2.5 million below the House number. The House has some one-time money in its bill; the Senate does not.

In all cases, the majority of the funds would be directed to the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Advocates say the additional money is expected to keep tuition increases below 5 percent each year, after collegiate costs for many students have increased by more than 70 percent in the past five years. The House bill also contains \$12.4 million in fiscal year 2009 for the university to reduce tuition increases.

Conferees again met April 25, but were reluctant to adopt more than technical, nonmonetary changes.

Talk about differing policy provisions was to occur April 26, but conferees would likely not adopt anything until a conference committee target is received from leadership the next day.

In addition to funding differences, provisions yet to be resolved include ways to reduce textbook costs to students, veterans benefits, marketing credit cards to students, the creation of a Legislative Commission on Postsecondary Funding, changes in the selection process for the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, additional membership on the MnSCU Board of Trustees, regulation of private postsecondary institutions and assessments for 10th and 11th grade students to ensure that passing scores on math, reading and language arts tests represent college readiness.

Potential problematic provision

Arguably, the most controversial issue to be addressed is a provision that could doom the entire package to failure — the Dream Act.

Among the amendments unsuccessfully offered by Republicans during the April 19 House floor debate, three tried to change or eliminate the provision. On more than one occasion, Pawlenty has promised to veto the bill if it contains the act.

Under the provision, illegal immigrants would be eligible for resident tuition at all public higher education institutions in Minnesota if they meet four criteria: at least

A Quick Look SF1989

Focus: University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Office of Higher Education, Mayo Foundation

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$3.1 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

| | |
|---|--------------|
| University of Minnesota | \$1.38 bil. |
| Minnesota State Colleges and Universities | \$1.34 bil. |
| Office of Higher Education..... | \$377.6 mil. |
| Mayo Foundation..... | \$2.25 mil. |

Selected policy provisions in House bill, but yet to be agreed upon by conference committee:

- tuition freeze at MnSCU campuses in 2009
- no state funds could be used to buy out the contract of a collegiate coach
- colleges and universities cannot accommodate a specific religious group without making an equal appropriation to other religious groups requesting accommodations
- establishment of an India Center at the University of Minnesota

three years of attendance at a Minnesota high school, graduation from a state high school or attainment of a GED in the state, registration or enrollment at a public higher education institution and the filing of an affidavit indicating they have filed an application to legalize their citizenship or will at the earliest opportunity they are eligible to do so.

Under the Senate offer, these students would be eligible to receive a scholarship or financial aid provided by private sources or an institution, unless immigration status is an eligibility criterion. Conferees nearly took up the provision April 25 before choosing otherwise. The House plan does not include this.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), who unsuccessfully sought to remove the language on the House floor, said it would go against

"This is not a partisan issue. ... This is not an ideological issue. This is a common sense issue."

— Rep. Carlos Mariani



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina, left, and Sen. Sandy Pappas, chairs of the Higher Education Finance Conference Committee, begin the process by going line-by-line through the two bills during the first meeting of the committee April 23.

federal law, and as all House representatives have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution, it would be wrong to allow it to pass. He also pointed out that there are currently 13 higher education institutions in the state that offer resident tuition to these students.

The amendment was defeated 71-61.

“This is not a partisan issue. ... This is not an ideological issue. This is a common sense issue,” said [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St.

Paul), the sponsor of [HF722](#). In addition to mentioning that a number of Republican House members co-sponsor the bill, he noted that similar statutes have been passed across the country. Mariani also said that the fiscal impact would be nominal, while Severson argued that it could possibly cost the state \$8 million a year.

Severson said that even if these students get a college education, because of their illegal

status, once they graduate they will not be able to work legally in the United States. “We’re going to give them a diploma and then say, ‘Go ahead and try and get a nursing license.’ Ain’t gonna happen.”

[Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings) and [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) offered other changes to the Dream Act, but both were voted down. 🗳️

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The invaders

Exotic species threaten state ecology, economy

By Nick Busse

By land, sea and air, Minnesota is being invaded. Bullfrogs, bugs, snails, fishes, birds, trees and even flowers — the invaders come in all shapes and sizes. Some of them have been here for decades; others are still hundreds of miles away, gradually working their way to our borders.

They're called invasive species, also known as "exotic" or "nonindigenous" species. They're not supposed to be here, but they are. Some hitch a ride in the ballast tanks of oceangoing ships and find their way into our lakes and rivers; others are mistakenly introduced halfway across the country and simply migrate here over time.

Invasive species push out native plants and animals, alter the state's natural habitat and generally cause ecological and economic disruptions. Some, like the fish-killing sea lampreys that inhabit Lake Superior, pose a serious threat to commercial and business interests. Each year, a joint U.S.-Canadian commission spends approximately \$16 million to control Great Lakes lamprey populations, which threaten the region's multi-billion dollar fisheries industry.

Others, like Eurasian water milfoil, are mostly an annoyance; however, even annoyances make an impact. Milfoil, a resilient invasive aquatic plant, has reduced the area suitable for swimming, boating and fishing on 190 lakes in the state — including 13 new ones in 2006, according to the [Department of Natural Resources](#).

New threats on the horizon

"Some of the No. 1 concerns people have aren't the ecological impacts, but the recreational impacts," said Luke Skinner,

terrestrial invasive plant program coordinator for the department.

Skinner is one among a relatively small number of state employees whose job it is to help mitigate the harmful effects of invasive species — a responsibility that falls primarily to the DNR and the [Department of Agriculture](#). Skinner said his department focuses mostly on wild animals and invasive aquatic species, while the agriculture department focuses on invasive terrestrial plants.

Dealing with invasive species is tricky; only some species can be controlled or eradicated. And with dozens of species in need of attention and limited funding to go around, Skinner said the department has to prioritize.

What's worse, some of the biggest threats are looming just over the horizon — literally.

In Michigan, for example, an Asian beetle known as emerald ash borer has ravaged ash tree populations, killing an estimated five million trees in the Detroit area alone, and is slowly spreading westward. Meanwhile, throughout

the eastern Great Lakes, a deadly fish disease known as viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS virus, has raised growing alarm among fisheries and environmental advocates alike. Sometimes referred to as "Ebola for fish," the virus causes internal hemorrhaging and has been responsible for massive fish kills in lakes Erie, Huron and Ontario.

Whether they eventually reach the state, these new threats are a sign that the problem is here to stay, and may actually be getting worse. And while efforts are underway to better address the issue through legislation, experts say they also need the help of an active and informed public to stop the spread of invasive species.

Education vs. management

DNR Conservation Officer Ken Soring relates a story about a fellow officer who spotted aquatic vegetation hanging off of a boat trailer near Grand Rapids last summer. The officer stopped and informed the driver that it was illegal — the plant was an invasive species. He thanked the officer, who let him off with a warning. But later that same day, the same officer spotted the same driver at a boat launch, getting ready to back the trailer into a lake — with the plant still stuck to it. This time, a citation was issued.

"That to me shows the extreme and hopefully rare noncompliance and nonconcern," Soring said.

Soring, who works on statewide invasive species enforcement efforts for the department, said that such instances of carelessness are the exception rather than the rule. But the story does illustrate what might be the two biggest obstacles to controlling the spread of invasive species in the state: public awareness and willingness to comply with sometimes inconvenient state laws.

For example, anglers are now required to drain their bait buckets and live wells after fishing in certain water bodies infested with zebra mussels, such as Mille Lacs Lake. It's a step that's necessary to prevent the spread of the mussels — pesky organisms for which there are no known means of control or eradication — but Soring said many anglers find it irritating.

"When you're fishing those waters, it takes an extra step in the process. ... Anytime



Gypsy moths



you require that extra step in order to be in compliance, it takes a little time to get people up to speed,” he said.

The DNR has attempted to raise public awareness about the danger of spreading invasive species via radio and TV ads, billboards, lawn signs, news releases, informational signs posted at boat launches and through one-on-one contact with members of the public. Skinner said such efforts are crucial.

“Our main thing is to train people and educate people so they really know about invasives and they’ll take those precautions. It’s a behavior change, so they start cleaning their equipment, they start looking for these things.”

Controlling the problem

Prevention efforts don’t always work, and controlling invasive species once they have already established themselves is often difficult. The options are usually limited, and total eradication of an invasive species is virtually impossible; however, there are a few success stories.

Chemicals designed to target specific species with minimal impact to other organisms, for example, have been successfully used against certain invasive aquatic species, such as lampreys. In addition, invasive species can sometimes be controlled through the use of animals or insects prone to killing that species — a method known as “biological control.”

Skinner gives the example of purple loosestrife — a plant that takes over wetlands. Since 1992, purple loosestrife has been effectively controlled through the release of certain insect species that consume and destroy the plant. Approximately 8.8 million leaf-eating beetles have been released at infestation sites around the state, often resulting in significant defoliation of the plant. Although the insects do not eradicate the plant completely, Skinner said they do manage it effectively.

Invasive species programs are likely to get a funding boost from this year’s state budget. The omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill ([HF2410/SF2096*](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), contains new money and provisions to combat invasive aquatic species, shade tree pests (including emerald ash borer) and Asian carp.

For her part, Wagenius thinks biological controls are the way of the future.



Courtesy: John D. Byrd, Mississippi State University, [www.forestryimages.org](#).

Purple loosestrife: native to Europe and Asia, this invasive wetland plant was introduced to North America during the 1800s and has been located in 68 of the state’s 87 counties, with some 2,000 recorded infestations in the state. Purple loosestrife crowds out native plants and reduces wildlife habitat.

“The problem is much bigger than just a traditional funding issue. We have to look at more bio-controls. That means a lot more science,” she said.

Wagenius said her division will likely hold an all-day conference on invasive species this fall, with the intention of examining “all the layers of the problem” and how best to

approach it from a legislative perspective.



Emerald ash borer image

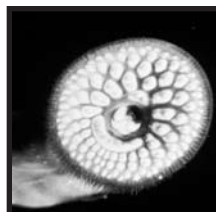
Courtesy: David Cappaert, [www.forestryimages.org](#)

Gypsy moth image

male(left) and female (right) Asian gypsy moths
Courtesy: USDA APHIS PPQ Archives, USDA APHIS PPQ, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Emerald ash borer



Sea Lamprey

According to the DNR Web site, the eel-like sea lamprey is “historically the most devastating invader in the Great Lakes.” Using its suction-cup-like mouth to feed on the blood of host fish, a single lamprey can kill as much as 40 pounds of fish in its lifetime. A joint U.S.-Canadian program has successfully reduced Great Lakes lamprey populations by 90 percent — at an average cost of \$16 million annually.

Courtesy: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Archives, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Eurasian Water Milfoil

First discovered in Lake Minnetonka in 1987, Eurasian water milfoil hampers recreational activities like swimming and boating and crowds out native plant species. The plant spreads easily; even a small fragment is enough to take root and establish a new colony. The DNR cites 190 water bodies in the state that are known to contain milfoil.

Courtesy: Alison Fox, University of Florida, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Round Goby

The bottom-dwelling round goby pushes out native fish species by out-competing them for food and habitat and eating their eggs, negatively impacting commercial and sport fishing. It can currently be found throughout the Great Lakes and the St. Louis River, although it has yet to spread to Minnesota’s inland lakes.

Courtesy: Center for Great Lakes and Aquatic Sciences Archives, University of Michigan, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Zebra Mussels

Roughly the size of a fingernail, zebra mussels litter beaches, clog water intakes on ships, push out native mussel species and contribute to fish and wildlife die-offs. Native to Eastern Europe, they were introduced into the Great Lakes in the late-1980s and have since spread throughout the Mississippi River and into numerous inland lakes. Infestations are virtually impossible to eliminate once established.

Courtesy: U.S. Geological Survey Archives, U.S. Geological Survey, [www.forestryimages.org](#)

Friday, April 20

HF2444-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance

Benson; Pacific Avenue pavement funding provided.

HF2445-Davnie (DFL)

Taxes

Bioscience zones tax increments permitted use expanded.

HF2446-Howes (R)

Taxes

Emily wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

Monday, April 23

HF2447-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Bear hunting special permits authorized for scientific, conservation and educational purposes.

HF2448-Morrow (DFL)

Finance

Biofuel; lignocellulosic ethanol production grant authorized.

HF2449-Sertich (DFL)

Finance

Hibbing Memorial Building expansion funding provided.

HF2450-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Farmed cervidae harvesting on licensed shooting preserves regulated.

HF2451-Nelson (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minnesota public pension plans; selection of a joint and survivor annuity benefit required if provided for under the plan.

HF2452-Rukavina (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee group insurance plan provider classification condition specified, and data release required.

Tuesday, April 24

HF2453-Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minneapolis Firefighters' Relief Association post-retirement adjustment investment modified.

Wednesday, April 25

HF2454-Brod (R)

Transportation Finance Division

Death certificates data expanded and protected, and surviving family members provided access to crashed vehicles.

HF2455-Olin (DFL)

Finance

Warroad; street lights and fish-cleaning house funding provided to replace facilities damaged by tornado.

Thursday, April 26

HF2456-Ward (DFL)

Finance

Brainerd; veterans nursing home design funding provided on the Brainerd Regional Treatment Center site.

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2007-08 Minnesota Senate

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| 6 | Bakk, Thomas M. (DFL)..... | 226 Cap..... | 8881 | 41 | Michel, Geoff (R)..... | 133 SOB..... | 6238 |
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| 51 | Betzold, Don (DFL)..... | 111 Cap..... | 2556 | 28 | Murphy, Steve (DFL)..... | 325 Cap..... | 4264 |
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| 38 | Carlson, Jim (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 7-8073 | 17 | Olseen, Rick E. (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 5419 |
| 50 | Chaudhary, Satveer S. (DFL)..... | 205 Cap..... | 4334 | 33 | Olson, Gen (R)..... | 119 SOB..... | 1282 |
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| 64 | Cohen, Richard J. (DFL)..... | 121 Cap..... | 5931 | 34 | Ortman, Julianne E. (R)..... | 125 SOB..... | 4837 |
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| 42 | Hann, David W. (R)..... | 127 SOB..... | 1749 | 46 | Scheid, Linda (DFL)..... | G-9 Cap..... | 8869 |
| 58 | Higgins, Linda (DFL)..... | 328 Cap..... | 9246 | 29 | Senjem, David H. (R)..... | 147 SOB..... | 3903 |
| 11 | Ingebrigtsen, Bill G. (R)..... | 132D SOB..... | 7-8063 | 23 | Sheran, Kathy (DFL)..... | G-24 Cap..... | 6153 |
| 49 | Johnson, Debbie J. (R)..... | 135 SOB..... | 3219 | 57 | Sieben, Katie (DFL)..... | 321 Cap..... | 7-8060 |
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MINNESOTA INDEX

Growing organics

| | |
|--|---------|
| In 2006, number of certified organic farms in Minnesota | 530 |
| In 2000 | 382 |
| By percent, growth between 2000 and 2005 in the number of certified organic acres in the state | 57 |
| In 2005, number of certified organic acres in Minnesota | 129,064 |
| In millions, total number of certified organic acres in U.S. | 4.4 |
| Minnesota's rank nationally in terms of total certified organic acres | 6 |
| By acre, average organic farm size in Minnesota | 324 |
| By acre, average farm size in state | 345 |
| State ranking for organic acres in corn | 1 |
| State ranking for organically fed beef cows | 10 |
| From 1997-2005, years Minnesota ranked No. 1 for number of organic soybean acres planted | 6 |
| In 2005, amount of sales nationally in organic food, in billions | \$13.8 |
| By percent, the annual increase nationally in sales of organic food and beverages between 1997 and 2005 | 18 |
| National sales, in millions, of fastest growing organic food sector in 2005 (meat/fish/poultry) | \$256 |
| Predicted annual sales dollar growth between 2004-2008, by percent | 20.7 |
| 2005 sales, in millions, of organic pet food | \$30 |
| Sales, in millions, of organic personal care products | \$282 |
| Year Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act | 1990 |
| Year that, for the first time, all 50 states reported having certified organic farms | 1995 |
| Number of operations in state with most certified operations (California) in 2005 | 1,738 |
| Certified organic acres, in millions, of pastureland in state with largest amount (Alaska) in 2005 | 1.46 |
| In bushels, yield per acre of organically grown corn in Minnesota | 142 |
| Non-organic | 179 |
| Number of farmers markets in 2007 listed with Minnesota Grown | 85 |
| Percentage of U.S. food shoppers who say they buy organics at least occasionally | 44 |

— L. SCHUTZ

Sources: 2006-The Status of Organic Agriculture in Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; United States Department of Agriculture.

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SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 18 • MAY 4, 2007

SAVING A LANGUAGE

VETO REACTION

FROM GROWER TO CONSUMER

HF2457 - HF2463

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: Robert E. Brown Jr., a member of the New Ulm Battery, takes a break between firings of the battery's 1856 field piece as part of the Freedom Day celebration held in front of the Capitol May 1. May is Military Family Appreciation Month.

—Photo by Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

By 2030, Minnesota's population of senior citizens is projected to be 1.3 million. Nursing home professionals say there may not be the capacity to meet the demand, and it is unclear whether this will be the home of choice for aging baby boomers.

The dying nursing home

Legislators are proposing big dollars to help revive struggling facilities

By MIA SIMPSON

It's a statement made in jest or satire: "Treat your children well. They pick your nursing home."

But the condition of many of Minnesota's nursing homes is no laughing matter. With 50 percent across the state insolvent, and a burgeoning elderly population, some policymakers are laboring to save dozens of nursing homes currently at risk of closure — a result of years of inadequate compensation, spending cutbacks and regional funding disparities.

"It's a very vulnerable situation," [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley) said. "They're being strangled, and it's been a very painful, slow process."

The issues date back decades, though proponents point to 2003, when funding to nursing facilities was frozen because of the state's \$4.2 billion budget deficit.

Funding recovered slightly two years later,

when nursing homes received a 2 percent increase for both years of the biennium — 1 percent lower than inflation, according to budget analysts.

The result today is a 7 percent disparity between nursing homes' revenue and their cost of doing business.

State funding is only a portion of the picture. Across the state, nursing facilities

average 38 years in age, and 56 percent will likely need renovating within the next decade. According to Patti Cullen, vice president of Care Providers of Minnesota, about 35 percent don't even have sprinkler systems that meet federal safety standards.

Payment mechanisms are also a factor. The majority of funding for many facilities is derived from Medicaid, which provides 86 percent of actual care costs. What's more, nursing homes serving Medicaid patients can't recoup funds as hospitals do because of a law prohibiting them from charging private payers more than state-paid residents.

Problems are worse in rural areas, where nursing homes are paid significantly less by the state than metropolitan-based homes. This is due to a tiered system, established in 1985, that split nursing homes into three categories based on factors such as geography

First Reading continued on page 4

and facility type.

Nursing homes in the first group, classified as deep rural, are paid 20 percent less than urban nursing homes in group three.

Thus facilities in Greater Minnesota are more likely to be insolvent, and they struggle to retain staff. According to Kenyon Sunset Home administrator John Boughton, his recent nursing hires are offered an hourly wage that is \$15 less than Twin Cities' rates, and when it comes to other labor, such as nursing assistants and janitorial staff, few homes in rural areas even provide benefits. The nursing home is operating at a loss of \$100,000 a year.

"The sad part is, these aren't unusual stories," Boughton said.

The crisis

The accumulating effect of these inequities, cutbacks and limitations translates to 50 percent of Minnesota's nursing homes being insolvent and 30 percent "in crisis," meaning they operate at negative margins of 5 percent or less. The majority of these homes are in rural areas.

While money gains the most attention, it's not the heart of the issue.

"It's about people," said Kari Thurlow, vice president of advocacy for the Minnesota Health and Housing Alliance. "It's about the quality of care we give to our parents and grandparents."

And according to state figures, the number of parents, grandmas and grandpas is expected to boom soon. By 2030, Minnesota's current population of senior citizens will double to 1.3 million.

There again the plot thickens: on the one hand, nursing homes may not have the capacity to meet the demands of this incoming

population; on the other hand, the baby boomers may not want them anyway.

The future

Five years ago, Minnesota's Long-Term Care Task Force declared nursing homes a system that may soon be obsolete, and suggested a shift from an "institutional" model that favors nursing facilities to one that emphasizes community options, such as assisted-living complexes and home-based care.

It's a change also pressured by the marketplace. According to the [Minnesota Board on Aging](#), more than 80 percent of seniors in need of long-term care lived in nursing homes in 1995. In 2005, it dropped to 50 percent.

Even the length of stay has altered. Nursing home administrators say residents don't remain on site for months or years anymore — instead it's days, and often simply to recuperate from an injury or medical procedure.

"The policies and public programs of yesterday will be neither fiscally viable nor well suited to the next generation of older Minnesotans," according to the board's Web site. "Minnesota must continue to move from institutional to community-based supports."

Legislators and lobbyists advocating for nursing homes acknowledge a changing tide. But they don't subscribe to it completely.

"I think the expectations will be different, and the baby boomers ... may not be satisfied with the current model," said Eken, who sponsored legislation on behalf of nursing facilities this session. "But there will always be a need for nursing homes because there will always be people whose children can't care for them anymore. We need to save the ones we have."

Thus a pledge, stated by legislators repeatedly, to rescue these homes.

"I'm going to fight like a tiger to bring money back," said [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault), who worked as a nurse in a nursing home for much of her professional life. "It's a fight I've been fighting for 20 years."


She, along with a half dozen others, sponsored separate pieces of legislation with fiscal impacts topping tens to hundreds of millions of dollars. Lobbyists in the field say it would cost about \$400 million if nursing homes are to recover in full.

Their wishes are being granted, sort of.

The House offered a 3 percent increase to nursing homes in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 — several percentage points less than most bills proposed — at a cost of \$138 million. It later incorporated two plans into its omnibus health and human services finance bill, [HF297](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), to decrease inequities between rural and urban facilities in the 2010-11 biennium. The first would bring reimbursement rates for tier one and two nursing homes up to tier three levels. The second would rebase or readjust rates for all facilities across a two-year period.

Together, they would cost the state approximately \$119 million. The Senate bill, [SF2171](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls) has a similar plan, with different timelines.

A conference committee is working out the differences between bills.

"More is done in this bill than has been done in years for the nursing homes," Eken said on the House floor April 20. "It is a welcome rain after a very long drought." 

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|---|---|--|
| Administration.....(651) 201-2555 | Iron Range Resources.....(218) 744-7400 | Driver and Vehicle Services...(651) 297-3608 |
| Agriculture(651) 201-6550 | (800) 765-5043 | Alcohol and Gambling |
| (800) 967-2474 | Labor and Industry(651) 284-5005 | Enforcement Division.....(651)201-7507 |
| Commerce(651) 296-4026 | (800) 342-5354 | Division of Homeland Security and |
| Corrections.....(651) 361-7200 | Mediation Services.....(651) 649-5421 | Emergency Management....(651) 201-7400 |
| Education.....(651) 582-8200 | Metropolitan Council.....(651) 602-1000 | State Duty Officer |
| Employee Relations.....(651) 259-3637 | Military Affairs.....(651) 268-8925 | (24-Hour Emergency)(651) 649-5451 |
| Employment and | Housing Finance Agency(651) 296-7608 | (800) 422-0798 |
| Economic Development.....(651) 296-3711 | (800) 657-3769 | State Patrol.....(651) 201-7100 |
| (800) 657-3858 | Higher Education Services(651) 642-0567 | Revenue |
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| (800) 657-3635 | (888) 646-6367 | 296-3781 |
| Finance(651) 201-8000 | Pollution Control Agency.....(651) 296-6300 | Sales and Use Tax Line.....(651) 296-6181 |
| Health(651) 201-5000 | (800) 657-3864 | Transportation(651) 296-3000 |
| Human Rights.....(651) 296-5663 | Public Safety | (800) 657-3774 |
| Human Services(651) 431-2000 | General Information(651) 201-7000 | Veterans Affairs(651) 296-2562 |

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held April 26-May 3 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

BONDING

City hall bonding

A new city hall could be built in McLeod County if the Legislature permits the issuance of bonds.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ron Shimanski](#) (R-Silver Lake), [HF102](#) would authorize the City of Winsted to issue \$4.9 million in general obligation bonds without a referendum for various public improvements. The bonds would be backed by city property taxes, said City Administrator Brent Mareck.

Mareck explained to the House Taxes Committee April 30 that the bonds would be used to build a city hall/community center/police station, improve parks and make other related public improvements. He said the city has rented space for a city hall for about 10 years, after the former city hall, built in 1896, developed mold issues.

Without special legislation, Winsted cannot move forward with the project because of net debt limitations.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus public finance bill.

A companion bill, [SF98](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel), was included in the Senate omnibus tax bill.

— S. HEGMAN

BUDGET

Deficiency funding

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Taking care of 2007 unexpected budget expenditures and unintended shortages is the intent of a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 2.

[Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) and [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul) sponsor the \$10.57 million supplemental budget request from the governor.

More than \$7.8 million is targeted for the

Metropolitan Council to fill a budgetary gap created because less than expected revenue is being generated from the motor vehicle sales tax from which the organization draws funding.

The law provides \$150,000 to the [Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board](#) to cover court-ordered payment of attorney's fees resulting from a First Amendment challenge regarding political activities relating to organizations.

While much of the case — *Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life vs. Kelly* — was struck down in U.S. District Court, a portion of campaign law was ruled unconstitutional, and the state was required to pay attorney's fees relating to that finding, according to Jeanne Olson, executive director of the board.

Other appropriations include:

- \$1.1 million to match FEMA funds received for natural disaster assistance payments;
- \$522,000 for Greater Minnesota transit assistance;
- \$240,000 to replace funding lost to an inadvertent repeal of a state statute;
- \$200,000 to the [Board on Judicial Standards](#) for special hearing costs;
- \$200,000 to the [Board of Public Defense](#) for transcript costs;
- \$192,000 for parenting time centers;
- \$66,000 to the ombudsman for mental health and developmental disabilities; and
- \$47,000 for tax court deficiencies.

[HF958/SF846*/CH32](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

CONSUMERS

Call centers to tell the truth

Service call centers would be required to disclose their location if asked by Minnesota consumers, under a bill passed 93-39 by the House May 1.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), [HF116](#) would establish a Minnesota customer's right to have the call center employee disclose the state or country where they are located. Additionally, a center located internationally that requests financial, credit or identifying information would have to disclose to a requesting customer if a stateside center is available. If a consumer call center doesn't have a stateside location, the consumer will have to decide whether to take the risk of disclosing personal information.

The attorney general would be permitted to prosecute a center that fails to disclose

information.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin) is the sponsor.

"Let's be able to protect that private information, protect Minnesota's consumers, give them a right to know," Atkins said.

Other than requiring a call center to identify its location, the rest of the bill isn't needed because federal and state laws already protect consumers, [Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie) said. "You're creating here a solution for a problem that really doesn't exist."

Tom Hesse, vice president of government affairs for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, told a House committee that bill requirements could result in poor customer service by rerouting consumers to other locations, resulting in longer service calls.

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Who needs two, legally?

Conduct an Internet search for tickets for any professional football team and you'll find at least five pages of Web sites ready to get you a seat, most at more than face value.

Minnesota may soon become a friendlier place for ticket resellers.

The House approved [HF189/SF372*](#), which would repeal a 1963 law that makes it illegal to resell a ticket to an event at a price greater than printed on the ticket. Following the 124-8 vote May 2, the bill goes to the governor. The bill passed the Senate 48-15 on Feb. 19.

There are several reasons this bill is good for Minnesota, said [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), who sponsors the bill with [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley). "You have a legal contract where A and B agree. Why would the government step in?"

Repealing this law would make Minnesota more attractive to those ticket reselling companies who want to move their businesses here, and consumers would win because the competition would bring down the price of tickets, he said.

[Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) spoke of events in 1987 that motivated her to work on getting the law repealed.

She saw news reports of police arresting people for scalping tickets at the World Series, while at the same time there were a number of serious crimes that remained unsolved. "Besides the misuse of police power, a scalping law is the worst kind of socialist government intervention with the free market system," she said.

— C. GREEN

WWII MEMORIAL

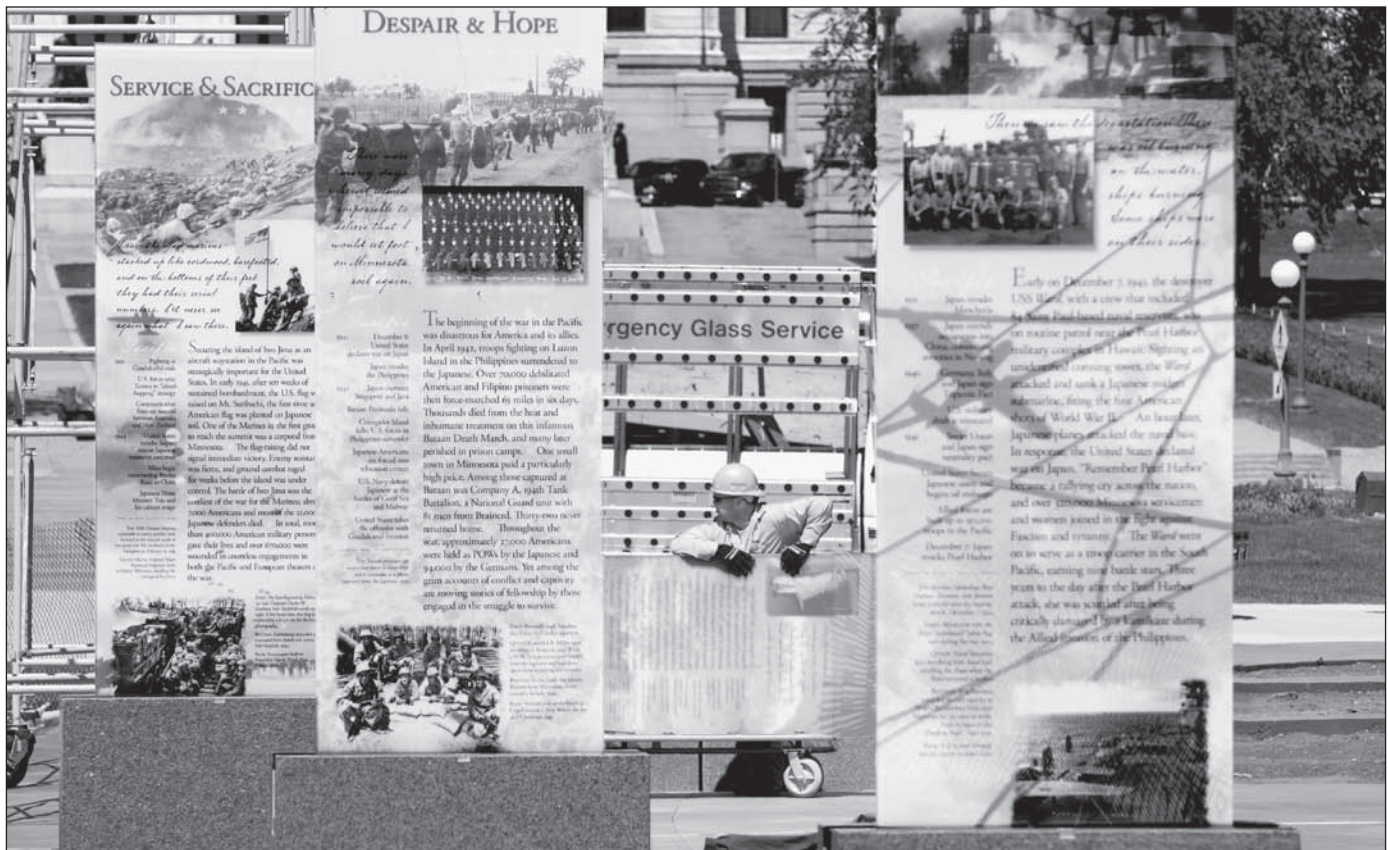


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Dean Tarr, an employee of Harmon Auto Glass, steadies one of the 400-pound panels erected at the World War II Memorial on the Capitol Mall May 2. The memorial is scheduled to be dedicated June 9.

EDUCATION

E-12 conference committee update

The E-12 Education Finance Conference Committee has agreed upon several non-controversial cost-free provisions, but the committee still has a ways to go.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) calls for \$13.94 billion in spending. Sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), [SF2095](#) calls for \$13.92 billion in spending. But the final product hinges on a budget target that the committee is waiting for from House and Senate leadership.

Although the committee has met several times and heard testimony, Greiling said May 2 that the committee is not expected to meet again until it receives the target. A target was to have been received by April 27. Three work groups continue to meet and address accountability, literacy and academic standards policy, but no consensus has been reached.

After going through a side-by-side

comparison of the two bills, agreement has been reached on several points, but conferees are withholding action until the target is known.

"Anything that deals with money we're going to hold until we have a target," Greiling said. "We're not going to spend a dime because even if it's the same it may not make the cut if it's money," she said.

One section adopted by the conference committee defines what qualifications are needed to be considered a highly qualified teacher. The committee approved extending by one year the rulemaking authority, which the Board of School Administrators may adopt governing school administrators. The committee also approved language that clarifies summer programs to mean extended school year services. The change is a reflection that some schools are in regular attendance during the summer.

— S. HARDING

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

EMPLOYMENT

Saying no to nurse overtime

Nurses employed at most state facilities would get the same ability to say no to extra work as those in the private sector.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the conference committee report for [HF966*](#)/[SF817](#) was approved [117-13](#) by the House and 50-10 by the Senate May 1. It awaits action by the governor.

Because some nurses felt they were being forced into too many overtime hours through intimidation, a 2002 law permits a nurse to refuse mandatory overtime without consequences from their employer if they are too tired or sick and believe it is in the best interest of the nurse and patients not to be in a caregiver role during those hours.

The bill, which has no fiscal cost, adds nurses employed by the state if the nurse is involved in resident or patient care. The bill does not supersede a valid collective bargaining agreement.

Because of the large fiscal impact if it were included, the [Corrections Department](#) was exempt under the original House provision, but not in the Senate version.

Howes said the agreement does not include department employees until July 1, 2008.

"We've asked the Department of Corrections to come back with a plan and report by Feb. 1, 2008, to the standing committees of the House and Senate," Howes said. "We've asked them to produce their procedures for hiring nurses, show us their scheduling of nurses at each facility, show us their ratio of supervisors to nurses, tell us how many pool nurses they use and where they use them, and how much overtime they use and where they use it and how many pool nurses they use at each facility."

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the report is "a good step forward."

"We have a particular responsibility to those Minnesotans who are being cared for by state employees," he said. "Tired nurses, nurses being forced to work overtime don't have the opportunity to provide the level of care that we want them to provide and that they want to provide."

— M. Cook

ENVIRONMENT

Firewood restrictions passed

A bill on its way to the governor's desk would forbid visitors to state parks and forests from bringing their own firewood unless it comes from a source approved by the Department of Natural Resources.

Sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), [HF1016/SF420](#)* is designed to prevent the spread of invasive species like emerald ash borer and other tree pests. It passed the House [115-13](#) April 27 and the Senate 52-6 April 30.

The bill would make it illegal to possess firewood on DNR-administered lands unless the wood is obtained from a distribution facility within such lands or purchased from a dealer who has been approved by the department. Hansen called the bill "another tool in the toolbox" to help manage the threat of invasive species in Minnesota.

"It is going to change behavior. There will be some inconvenience," Hansen said, noting that the Department of Agriculture recently warned of an infected brand of commercially produced firewood that may be headed for the state.

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) said the threat posed by emerald ash borer, an Asian beetle that has devastated ash tree

populations in Michigan and surrounding states, made passage of the bill urgent.

"If you haven't noticed, we're having exceptionally warm weather right now. We know that if this type of wood is brought in from other states and it has this ash borer in it, it could infest our state. ... This is very serious stuff, and we should have done this a long time ago," he said.

[Rep. Sarah Anderson](#) (R-Plymouth) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have required the DNR to purchase its firewood from within the state's borders. Hansen said the amendment would have delayed the bill's progress in the Senate.

— N. Busse

LCCMR bill passed

A bill awaiting Gov. Tim Pawlenty's signature would appropriate approximately \$23.4 million from the state's environmental trust funds for a variety of projects relating to land, water and air protection.

[HF293*/SF450](#), sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), represents the recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#). It was passed 130-3 by the House April 26 and 65-0 by the Senate April 18.

The purpose of the LCCMR, formerly the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, is to make recommendations to the Legislature on the use of money from the state's environmental trust funds—primarily, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives its funding mostly from lottery proceeds.

The bill includes:

- \$14.8 million for land projects, including forest legacy conservation easements, Minnesota habitat corridors partnership continuation, metro conservation corridors continuation, and land acquisitions for state, metro and regional parks and trails;
- \$5.1 million for 15 water resource projects;
- \$2 million for natural resource information projects, including continuation of the county biological survey and soil survey; and
- \$160,000 to fund an "emerging issues" account.

Also included is a provision that would ensure that all LCCMR meetings are open to the public.

The LCCMR's current recommendations apply to fiscal year 2008; a second set of separate recommendations will be presented for fiscal year 2009.

The House originally passed the bill 121-6 Feb. 26. Tingelstad said the Senate amended

it to eliminate an unintended potential for double payment to the same owner under two different sections of the forest legacy conservation easement program.

— N. Busse

Mercury bill passed

A bill that would restrict the sale, use and disposal of certain products containing mercury was passed 109-23 by the House April 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF1316/SF1085](#)* would place a number of restrictions on products containing mercury, including:

- requiring that fluorescent light bulbs be recycled;
- requiring motor vehicle electric switches, fluorescent or high-intensity discharge lamps, laboratory chemicals, reagents, fixatives and electrodes to be clearly labeled by retailers if they contain mercury;
- banning the sale of certain medical devices, mercury switches and miscellaneous products containing mercury; and
- banning the purchase, store or use of elemental mercury and mercury-containing instruments in schools.

Hortman amended the bill with a provision that would require retailers who sell fluorescent light bulbs to display signs that read: "Fluorescent bulbs save energy and reduce environmental pollution. Note: Fluorescent bulbs contain a small amount of mercury and must be recycled at the end of their use. Contact your county or utility for recycling options."

[Rep. Dean Simpson](#) (R-Perham) said that Hortman's amendment would place an onerous burden on retailers.

"It's just another thing for the retailers to have to do," he said, adding that it should not be the retailers' place to have to educate the public on the proper use and disposal of light bulbs.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) tried twice, without success, to amend the bill by adding a provision that would have required medical providers administering a vaccine that contains more than a trace amount of mercury to provide patients with a written disclosure. [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) said that such a requirement might discourage parents from getting their children vaccinated for the flu, and Hortman said the issue needs to go through the normal committee process.

As amended by the House, the bill now goes back to the Senate.

— N. Busse

FAMILY

A look at conservators and guardians

A conservator is someone appointed by a court to manage a minor or incapacitated person's estate. A guardian, on the other hand, is qualified to offer support and care pursuant to an appointment by a court or family member.

Sponsored by [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), [HF1396*/SF759](#) would require the state court administration to convene a study group to make recommendations related to conservatorships and guardianships throughout Minnesota.

The group would need to review the rights of wards and protected peoples; the powers and duties of conservators and guardians; certification and registration; training; financial auditing; and reimbursement of attorneys, conservators and guardians.

The group would include, but not be limited to, representatives from probate courts, state protective services, the Minnesota State Bar Association and the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#). The group would need to present its findings to the Legislature by March 15, 2008.

Approved by the House 103-28 on April 30, the bill now awaits Senate action.

— C. GREEN

GOVERNMENT

State government finance agreement

It took longer than it was supposed to, but a conference committee agreement was reached May 3 on the omnibus state government finance bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF953/SF1977*](#) would set state policies and fund state agency needs for staffing, operations and some special projects. Given a \$549 million target by legislative leaders, conferees eventually reached a \$551.8 million agreement. The governor's recommendation totaled \$646.7 million.

The conference committee report is expected to soon be before both bodies for action.

A contentious multi-million dollar State Capitol restoration plan was a sticking point before legislators agreed to allocate \$750,000 to fund a restoration project study group. An additional \$4 million for the project is expected to go into a second bonding bill, if one is completed. The original Senate offer sought \$15 million for restoration; the House plan offered no funding.

Several House members voiced concern about previous restoration plans made without House input.

"We're gonna waste another \$10 million and have the controversy again," if the next plan doesn't involve all of those affected by a restoration project, said [Rep. Loren Solberg](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids).

Another controversial item was domestic partner benefits.

Both bills directed collective bargaining agreements to offer health insurance to domestic partners, if the same is offered to spouses of state employees, something that could ultimately get the bill vetoed.

An April 26 letter from Gov. Tim Pawlenty stated, "The bills mandate domestic partner health and sick leave benefits to same sex couples. As you are aware, this is a controversial issue that I oppose."

A Kahn amendment changes the reference from "domestic partners" to "significant individual" and orders the Department of Employee Relations to conduct a study on the cost associated with offering health benefits to those who would qualify.

Election provisions originally in the House bill were included in the final product.

They would allow for automatic voter registration when applying for a driver's license; lease agreements to be used as forms of identification for Election Day registration; providing voter registration and active status information on the Office of the Secretary of State Web site; and ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter.

Other agreed upon items include the establishment of two new commissions: the Minnesota Commission of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness.

— P. OSTBERG

Nonprofit firefighter costs

Nonprofit firefighter corporations would be added to the list of governmental units able to buy goods at set prices, under a bill awaiting gubernatorial action.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF465/SF321*](#) adds "independent nonprofit firefighter corporation" to the list of already designated groups that obtain equipment through a state bidding process that allows for the best possible price for purchasing goods. Designated state groups include every city, county, town, school district, political subdivision, University of Minnesota and nonprofit hospitals.

The bill, approved 60-0 by the Senate Feb. 15 and 132-0 by the House May 1, would allow

those groups to save money which "in turn saves taxpayer dollars," Kranz said.

There are between 80 and 100 nonprofit fire corporations in the state, with the majority in the Arrowhead region, said Nyle Zikmund, Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View fire chief. "We're simply seeking that same latitude enjoyment of buying off those state contracts."

— P. OSTBERG

Economic development agreement

A wide-ranging jobs and economic development bill is headed for the House and Senate floors.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), [SF2089](#) was approved May 2 by the Economic Development Finance Conference Committee.

"This is a product we can stand tall on and present to the House and Senate to ensure economic development for people in the state," said Murphy, who expects the conference committee report to be before both bodies May 4 or May 5.

The \$448.8 million package is nearly an even split between the original House and Senate proposals.

"There was a lot of moving of numbers, but we've got a good product," Tomassoni said.

Among the issues addressed are funding for the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), [Department of Labor and Industry](#), [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#), [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#), [Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board](#) and the [Minnesota Historical Society](#).

"This is the best package for housing in a long time," Murphy said.

Of the \$118.49 million to the housing agency, \$39.6 million would be for program increases, including an additional \$7.5 million toward family homeless prevention; \$7.49 million for the Housing Trust Fund, which provides no-interest deferred loans to help low-income people finance affordable permanent and supportive rental housing and limited equity cooperative housing; and an additional \$2 million for rental assistance to help families where at least one adult has a serious and persistent mental illness.

Other provisions include:

- establishment of a nanotechnology development fund program to develop a collaborative economic development program between the state, academia and the private sector to, in part, promote an increased use of advanced nanoinstrumentation;
- the creation of a small business growth acceleration program to help qualified companies implement technology and business improvements;

- a requirement that every licensed health care facility in the state shall adopt a safe patient handling program;
- money for the Minnesota Boxing Commission to become a self-funded entity;
- establishment of restricted journeyman and restricted master plumber licenses;
- creation of a packinghouse workers bill of rights;
- authorization for the historical society, in addition to the adjutant general, to contract for the repair, restoration and preservation of regimental battle flags; and
- a requirement that all urinals covered under the jurisdiction of the plumbing code must have a water flush device with a volume of no more than 1 gallon per use.

— M. COOK

No attorney general office hearing

Caution was the word of advice to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee May 1 as members considered whether to hold a public hearing regarding a controversy in the [Office of the Attorney General](#).

Before members was a motion offered by [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) on the House floor April 27 calling for the House Commerce and Labor Committee to conduct a hearing concerning allegations that Attorney General

Lori Swanson may be punishing her staff in retaliation for their efforts to unionize. Since January, three dozen staffers have reportedly left the office.

Emmer's motion was superseded by another from [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) calling for the motion to be heard in the rules committee.

The dispute within the attorney general's office appears to be ongoing, said Joel Michael, counsel with the nonpartisan House Research Department. Although a hearing would be appropriate under House rules, the issue relates to employment law and public hearings could hold implications for state liability.

"Bringing members of the executive branch in and questioning them, there is potential for claims ... "even if all the testimony is truthful and accurate," he said.

Michael could not recall another time when the House investigated an ongoing employment-law personnel matter in the executive branch.

"In general, the Legislature wants to look at things where there may be a legislative remedy, and I don't know exactly whether this has implications for changes in the law," he said.

Sertich, who successfully tabled the motion, said the concerns of House nonpartisan staff should be recognized, and "for that reason alone we should let this alone until this comes to more resolution."

[Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) objected, saying that Sertich had indicated on the House floor, the issue would receive a hearing. He accused him of burying it in the "black hole of the rules committee."

Sertich said the role of the committee is to "find out if this motion is deemed to move forward, under our body and our rules. ... We are certainly not sweeping anything under the rug."

In a related action, Emmer requested information May 1 from Swanson, under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act including:

- land-line and cell phone records since November 2006 for Swanson and former attorney general Mike Hatch;
- a list of all employees on staff since Swanson took office, along with those that have been terminated; and
- all e-mails, letters and memos, including those between Swanson and Hatch, regarding termination of staff members and issues relating to unionizing the office.

— L. SCHUTZ

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Call House Public Information Services at
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

BIG BANG

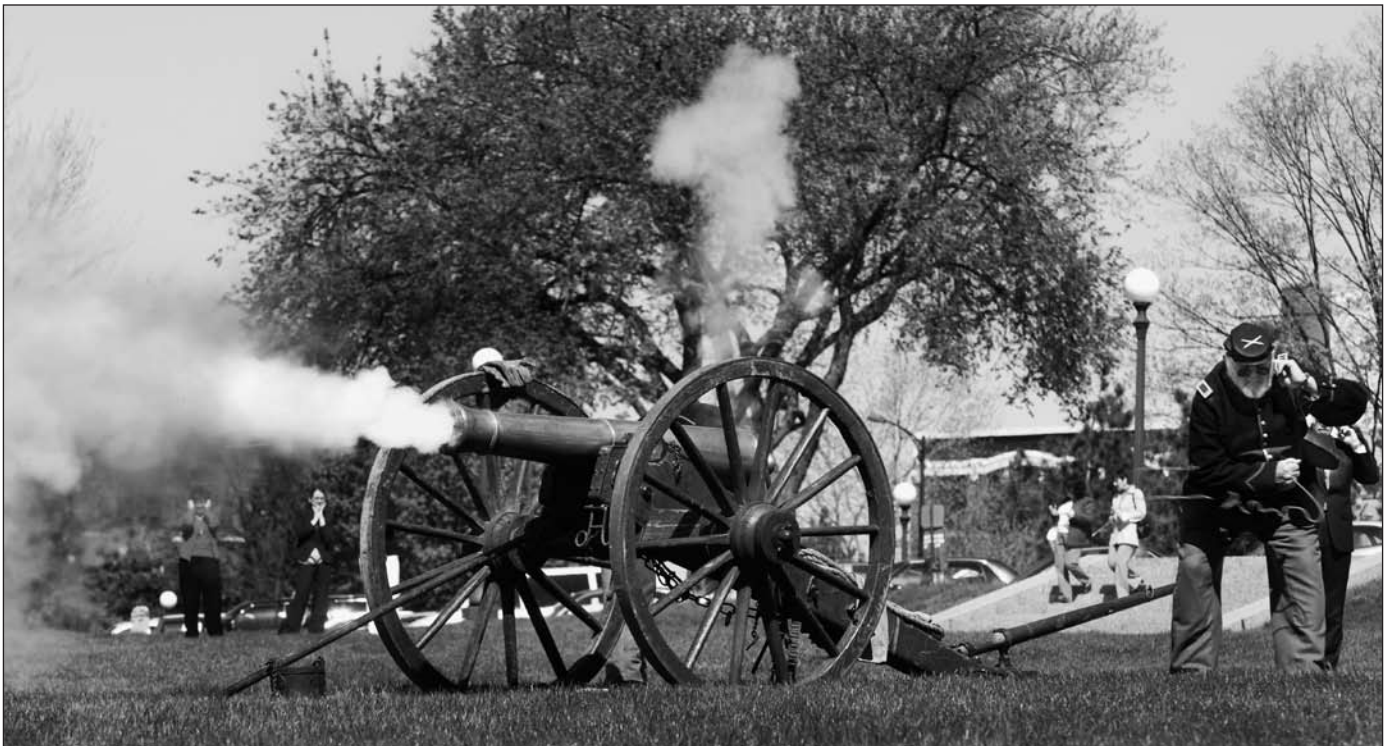


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Flames shoot out the barrel as John Fritsche fires the New Ulm Battery's 1856 field piece as part of the Freedom Day celebration on the front lawn of the Capitol May 1.

Backflow preventionSigned
by
the
governor

Beginning Aug. 1, 2007, campground owners will have a new option to prevent backflow spill into drinking water systems, following a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Called the “most important bill for campground owners this year” by one of its sponsors, Rep. John Ward (DFL-Brainerd), the law will permit use of a hose connection backflow preventer and vacuum breaker instead of the traditional dual check valve device required by the Department of Health.

The difference, according to Ward, is cost: a campground owner may spend \$4,000 to \$20,000 — depending on campground size — to install the dual device, which also must be taken out in the fall and reinstalled in spring. He said the alternative is cheaper and does not require the extra labor annually.

Sen. Paul Koering (R-Fort Ripley) is the Senate sponsor.

[HF2090](#)*/[SF2111](#)/CH24

— M. SIMPSON

Compromise still ahead

As of noon May 3, about \$13 million in General Fund spending separated the House and Senate as they work toward compromise on an omnibus health and human services finance bill.

The latest Senate offer on [SF2171](#), sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) and Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), significantly narrowed provision gaps in mental health and welfare programs, though expensive proposals in nursing homes and health care for children haven’t been reconciled.

“We’re close on many different issues, but there are still some fundamental differences,” Huntley said.

One dissimilarity is the Cover all Kids provision, which would provide health care to most Minnesota children in a two-stage process. The provision is still only in the House proposal, though members removed presumptive eligibility, which would have entitled health care to children should they enter a hospital, from the bill.

The omnibus bill appropriates funding for programs administered by the Health and Human Services departments. It also allots biennial spending for the Veterans Home Board, the Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board and 16 other health-related boards.

The two versions of the bill originally differed by approximately \$100 million in General Fund, Health Care Access Fund and

other dollars for the 2008-09 biennium.

Both now remain within the nearly \$9.82 billion funding target.

The Senate conceded several health care funding positions by eliminating some proposed expansions to MinnesotaCare, such as granting undocumented children access the program and removing the \$50,000 income limit and the children’s four-month insurance barrier for coverage.

Common funding-related provisions include:

- mental health initiatives, which now almost completely match the governor’s mental health proposal that includes grants for children and adult services, a model benefit set for Minnesota health care programs and a regional children’s mental health pilot;
- the elimination of the Minnesota Family Investment Program family cap, which denies more cash assistance to recipients who have children on the program;
- increased aid to counties, which will lose approximately \$80 million in federal funding;
- E-health grants, which would help hospitals establish electronic health records; and
- pandemic flu preparedness, an initiative of the governor.

— M. SIMPSON

Medical marijuana

Medical marijuana got the green light from members of the House Finance Committee and a thumbs-up from the Senate May 1.

Committee members approved the bill 20-14 and sent it to the House Ways and Means Committee, which is scheduled to hear it May 4.

The Senate bill, [SF345](#), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), passed 35-29. Gov. Tim Pawlenty has threatened to veto the legislation.

[HF655](#), sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), would allow medical use of marijuana for patients suffering from cancer, intractable pain and other diseases, so long as it’s recommended by a physician. Approved users would register with the state and could obtain 2.5 ounces of the drug from registered organizations, which may grow up to 12 plants for each patient.

Committee members opposed to the proposal challenged the amount granted to each person and asked what would legally prevent a patient from seeking the drug from sources other than registered organizations.

“I don’t think it requires anywhere that the person buy it from a registered organization,” Rep. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria) said.

“If you don’t get it (there) then you’ve violated the law,” Huntley said.

Others opposed expressed “disgust” and “embarrassment” that the Legislature would consider such a bill.

“For every one person you’ve sat with that’s suffered through pain, I can show you a 50:1 ratio of people that have been hurt by illegal drug use, and it starts out with marijuana,” said Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder), who worked in law enforcement. “For those who think there are complete protections, you’ve got your head in the sand.”

Supporters argued that the issue is ultimately one of compassion.

“I don’t think this is funny or light-hearted. This is a very serious and compassionate effort being brought forward,” said Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls).

— M. SIMPSON

Sexual assault victim care

The governor will now decide the fate of the Compassionate Care for Sexual Assault Victims Act.

Sponsored by Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) and Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), [HF1442/SF1266](#)* would provide a standard of care for sexual assault victims in hospitals statewide. It was passed 65-0 by the Senate April 18 and 105-27 by the House May 1.

Slawik called the bill an “agreement between the Minnesota Medical Association and Catholic hospitals.” It would require providers to administer appropriate information and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and emergency contraceptives to patients. However, it provides an exception for contraceptives should the female be found pregnant.

Floor debate centered on parental notification by hospitals, which would have been mandated through an amendment unsuccessfully offered by Rep. Bob Dettmer (R-Forest Lake).

“All it does is require contact to parents that a treatment’s been done,” Dettmer said. “They will find out in the end ... when the bill arrives in the mail.”

Members opposed to his effort said the amendment would impose more hurdles to care, and may be inappropriate in some cases.

“Sometimes it’s the parents who’ve perpetuated the rape, and this wouldn’t allow for an exception to that,” Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said.

Slawik also refuted concerns by members that the emergency contraceptive used — Plan B — might cause abortions.

“Plan B ... is not going to cause a woman who’s pregnant to lose her baby,” she said.

— M. SIMPSON

INDUSTRY

Penalty waived

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Truckers hauling biofuels could have a misdemeanor penalty waived for not hauling the state required diesel-biodiesel blend, under a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 30.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), the law gives the commerce commissioner the ability to grant a temporary exemption from the blending requirements if supply is insufficient.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

Juhnke said a situation occurred last year where those hauling fuels were unable to obtain the required blended amount because a terminal wasn't operating properly. Although incidents at pipelines and refineries are "few and far between," there is still a risk of those hauling the goods to be violating the law.

Under the law, terminal operators are required to notify the director of the Weights and Measures Division of the Department of Commerce when "regular grade gasoline, number 1 diesel, number 3 diesel, kerosene, heating oil, ethanol, and biodiesel are physically not available for sale to licensed distributors."

Also, the commissioner is required to work with the agriculture commissioner, biodiesel producers, ethanol producers, pipeline operators, and terminal operators to ensure that biodiesel and ethanol are available for blending at pipeline and refinery terminals.

[HF1300/SF1069](#)*/CH28

— P. OSTBERG

INSURANCE

Insurance verification law repealed

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A law that has been more problematic than it was worth has been eliminated.

In 2003, a law was passed that required the [Department of Public Safety](#) to send letters to various drivers requesting proof of auto insurance. If the driver did not respond, falsely claimed coverage or admitted not having coverage, the department would suspend the driver's license.

According to the law's sponsor, [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), the program caused more problems than it was worth.

A 2005 law suspended the program while the department worked to find a way to make the program work. It couldn't.

The new law, also sponsored by [Sen. Minority Leader David Senjem](#) (R-Rochester), and signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 26, took effect one day later.

[HF448](#)*/[SF1912](#)/CH22

— C. GREEN

County recorder appointment

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Thanks to a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 30, Beltrami County may appoint someone as its county recorder. The recorder is currently an elected position.

Sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids) and [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), the law still requires an 80 percent vote of the county board. It also provides for a reverse referendum before the law can go into effect.

The law also provides that the current officeholder can complete her term before the new appointment is made.

[HF1193/SF1098](#)*/CH26

— C. GREEN

Personnel policies updated

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 30 gives Scott County permission to begin a pilot program that will administer a new recruiting system, establish rules for

monitoring applicant pools and establish a

merit system and procedures for disciplinary action.

The law will also give preference to veterans, placing those who meet minimum qualifications for an open position ahead of other applicants.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) and [Sen. Claire Robling](#) (R-Jordan), the law takes effect upon local approval.

[HF1490](#)*/[SF1419](#)/CH25

— C. GREEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

No commission expense increase

**Vetoed
by
the
governor**

The amount of money a charter commission can be allocated has not changed in four decades. In his first veto of this session, Gov. Tim Pawlenty decided that the resources

available will remain the same.

"I am mindful that many things have changed since the current law was first put into place in 1961," Pawlenty wrote in his April 30 [veto message](#). "However, if these commissions have legitimate expense needs, current law allows the city council to approve expenditures beyond the current limit. The Legislature need not usurp city councils in this regard."

Sponsored by [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the bill would have raised the

SHOWING APPRECIATION



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Lt. Col. Jim Swanson of Little Canada, *right*, and other members of the Minnesota Army National Guard listen to speakers at the Military Family Appreciation Month rally in the Capitol Rotunda May 1. The event honored active military, National Guard members, veterans and their families.

maximum amount of funds available for a charter commission from \$1,500 to \$5,000.

[HF1105/SF1017](#)*/CH27

— C. GREEN

MILITARY

Bonus for the officers

Signed
by
the
governor

Commissioned officers in the National Guard will qualify for a reenlistment bonus, and could apply for a newly established \$1,000 tuition reimbursement grant, under a new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 23.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) and [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), the law expands the bonus program, currently only available to enlisted personnel, to the Guard's commissioned officers. Hosch said the bill is a request from the [Minnesota National Guard](#) to help with its recruitment efforts.

The bill also establishes 25 annual postsecondary education reimbursement grants, up to \$1,000 each. The grants will be available, on a competitive basis, to current National Guard members or a person who agrees to enlist. The money is for reimbursement of postsecondary education expenses not covered by other awards that may be available to the member.

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1594*/SF952](#)/CH21

— L. SCHUTZ

TAXES

Tax bill works through conference

House and Senate tax committee conferees began meeting with the same goal in mind: reducing property taxes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington) and [Sen. Tom Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), [HF2362/SF1024](#) has similarities and differences, one major difference being a citizens' tax bill.

In an effort to "sweeten up" the Senate conferees, House conferees presented them with an abridged copy of the citizens' property tax relief bill May 2 in paper cups also containing candy.

"[HF2142](#) is a gift right from the kitchen table to the committee table," said [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), sponsor of the bill. "The peoples' voice is grounded in this." It has no Senate companion.

Coffee was also provided from Caribou Coffee, which is headquartered in the Twin Cities. Bakk brought conference committee

members what Lenczewski called a "regal" looking coffee mug the day before.

"We just wanted to make sure you see the differences," said [Rep. Denise Ditttrich](#) (DFL-Champlin). "We brought paper cups and the citizens' bill. You brought mugs."

Bakk said some of the provisions in the bill might be a good idea. "I'm sure we have some members who would be interested in this."

No action was taken.

Provisions of the property tax section include:

- expanding eligibility for the senior citizen property tax deferral program;
- establishing a seasonal recreational property tax deferral program;
- reinstituting the "this old house" program, which would exclude the increase in value due to a new improvement made to a home at least 50 years old for 10 years;
- requires the commissioner of revenue, in consultation with county officials, to improve public awareness and participation in property tax relief programs;
- requires cities with a population of more than 2,500 and counties to prepare and send a supplemental proposed property tax notice under certain circumstances; and
- requires studies of the costs of the truth in taxation program and the level of taxpayer participation at the hearings and of the fiscal disparities program.

Discussion is expected to continue on the bill. It is unknown when the conference committee report will be completed.

— S. HEGMAN

Public finance discussion started

The House Taxes Committee began hearing bills April 30 for possible inclusion in its omnibus public finance bill.

Bills included in this omnibus bill would effect city and county local governments.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), [HF2268](#) is the annual bill endorsed by the Minnesota Institute of Public Finance. It would authorize the issuance of debt for town and county subordinate service districts and would make permanent the authority to issue capital notes for computer software. It would also authorize the issuance of debt anticipation of the receipt of federal grants from transit projects.

Some provisions include:

- removing the restriction that not more than two questions can be submitted to voters at a special election conducted through the mail;
- allowing a city or county to enter into an agreement with another political subdivision or a state agency with respect to federal grants for transportation or transit projects, and to

issue obligations in anticipation of federal grants for transportation or transit;

- changing the required time period for publication of a public notice in a newspaper from 14 days to 30 days; and
- eliminating the expiration date for cities to issue capital notes for certain equipment or software.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus public finance bill. A companion bill, [SF1933](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), was recommended to pass April 27 by the Senate Taxes Committee. The Senate language is also in that body's omnibus tax bill ([SF1024](#)), sponsored by Bakk.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Which road to take?

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the capital investment bill has left members of the Transportation Finance Conference Committee at a fork in the road.

Following the May 1 veto, conferees wondered aloud which path they should take as they try to pave an agreement: plow ahead with work on a bill that contains tax increases for funding needs, or send a lights-on bill that the governor would likely sign, but won't help the state's road and transit needs.

The other problem facing conferees is that, as of May 2, they had not received a funding target from legislative leaders — something that, according to deadlines approved earlier this year, should have been done by April 27.

"Everything's all fun and games until somebody gets their eye poked out, and the governor just poked out my eye," said [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing) after he read the governor's veto message.

Murphy, who co-chairs the committee with [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), and other conferees expressed concern that the veto signals the governor's disinclination to help move the state forward. They fear that reluctance would continue if he receives a transportation funding package that includes a gas tax increase.

"We can reach a compromise if he's reasonable, and he's not reasonable right now," Murphy said.

Lieder indicated a veto would lead to greater worsening of roads and increased congestion.

"Wrongly or rightly, we have taken a position that if the bill is vetoed, we are going to send him a lights-on bill, which just allows the department to operate with basically the money they have. ... There's nothing in it for transit."

Other conferees, including [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina), [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), said their focus should be on putting together a committee report that can receive enough House and Senate support so a veto could be overridden.

"We can exercise our leadership to get something done for Minnesota," Hortman said.

— M. COOK

Highway turnbacks

A new law will turn back two roads to local governments.

Effective April 27, 2007, a nearly 1-mile stretch of Trunk Highway Route 145 near Willmar is returned to the city

to be used as part of an industrial park. [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Joe Gimse](#) (R-Willmar), said the turnback is crucial to a company looking to construct a large building project. Once the road is turned back, it will become part of the industrial park.

Signed
by
the
governor

Juhnke said the city and other local units of governments agree to the change, but statute requires legislative approval. No money is involved.

The law also removes a stretch of Highway 262 from the trunk highway system and turns it over to Martin County. This no-cost turnback, from Granada to Interstate 90, is effective the day following the transportation commissioner's receipt of an agreement with the county.

[HF539](#)*/[SF600](#)/CH23

— M. COOK

DAY OF PRAYER



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

People gather at the State Capitol to commemorate National Day of Prayer May 3.

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A bill that just about everyone loves

Ag and vets departments could see significant funding increase

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Called by one House member the bill that “even my mother would vote for,” the omnibus agriculture and veterans finance bill may go down this session as the bill that nearly everyone loves.

After House and Senate conferees came to relatively quick agreement on [HF2227](#)*/[SF1925](#), House members gave overwhelming support, passing the bill 130-1 May 1. Later in the day, it passed the Senate 64-0. Coming in \$4.68 million under the governor’s target, supporters expect it will be signed into law.

Going into conference committee, there was little difference between the House’s \$175 million target and the governor’s goal of \$174.3 million. But the Senate’s proposal was \$166.6 million.

The resulting compromise is a \$169.6 million General Fund spending proposal for the 2008-09 biennium for the Agriculture, Veterans Affairs and Military Affairs departments, Board of Animal Health and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.

The bill, sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), represents a 20 percent increase in base funding for the Department of Agriculture and a combined 70 percent increase for the departments of Veterans Affairs and Military Affairs.

The five House conferees were unanimous in supporting the bill, but two of the five Senate conferees did not sign off on the measure. [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls) said on the Senate floor that because of the veteran’s provisions, he would be voting for the bill’s passage, but he did not sign the report because the bill did not do enough for bioenergy.

[Sen. Steve Dille](#) (R-Dassel) did not sign the report either. He later said that as a veterinarian, he was unhappy with amended language dealing with equine dentistry and animal chiropractic. Veterinarians would

like to see regulations for these practitioners, and original language in the House bill was acceptable to them. However, the agreed upon language calls for a working group to study standards training and qualifications for people providing animal husbandry services.

Ag and bioenergy

Juhnke said that House initiatives are reflected strongly in the bill, but not funded to the extent as originally proposed.

The bill lays the framework for achieving the Legislature’s goal of at least 25 percent of energy consumed in the state coming from renewable resources by 2025.

“Through this bill, we are starting our efforts to coordinate our renewable efforts in the state,” Juhnke said.

To that end, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute would be charged with coordinating the state’s next generation energy efforts. A NextGen Energy Board would be created to administer grants to assist locally owned facilities help move the state toward energy independence. Also, a Renewable Energy Roundtable is called for to bring experts together on a regular basis to identify bioenergy opportunities.

Being an “ag” bill, there are several animal- and crop-related funding proposals, including \$2 million in biennial spending

for continuation of the dairy development and profitability enhancement and business planning grant program.

Food shelves would also benefit from the bill. Second Harvest Heartland would be the recipient of a \$1 million grant to purchase milk from state producers and processors for its six food banks.

The Senate also inserted language affording grants for sustainable agriculture efforts.

Vets support


The bill’s military and veteran’s affairs provisions would address the needs of returning military members, especially as the state prepares for the expected return later this summer of more than 2,500 deployed National Guard members, Juhnke said.

From college campuses to medical help, “We want to be prepared,” he said.

The House needed to compromise with the Senate on funding of some programs, especially at the county veterans service level. But Juhnke said the majority of the cuts in veterans spending are related to facility maintenance.

Now included in the bill is a Senate provision creating an ombudsman position at the Minneapolis Veterans Home for residents and their family members.

A provision that would provide spousal education benefits received a financial bump in conference committee. The House had proposed a one-time allocation of \$26,000 to provide grants to spouses of deceased veterans, that amount was raised to \$52,000 in one-time money.

A House proposal to provide \$1 million for testing of veterans for depleted uranium underwent a significant change in conference committee. Under the compromise, a \$100,000 allocation in each year of the biennium would be used for information and outreach regarding the availability of depleted uranium testing services provided by the federal government. 

Veto reaction

Future of a capital investment bill is uncertain

By SONJA HEGMAN

The House heard that four-letter word that has been threatened since session began: Veto.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty flexed his power on the capital investment bill May 1, just one day after it was approved [84-49](#) by the House and 48-15 by the Senate.

Saying it was four times larger than his recommendations, Pawlenty expressed his disappointment in the \$334 million bill. In contrast, his bill recommendations totaled about \$71 million for emergency spending items. The past two bonding bills were about \$1 billion each.

"The DFL majority is utterly incapable of exercising any restraint," Pawlenty said.

Many legislators have consistently said the odd year of the biennium is for emergency bonding only. House Capital Investment

Finance Division Chairwoman [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul), who sponsored [HF886*/SF2157](#), with [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), has said that "historically the state alternates large bills with small bills" and it has nothing to do with emergencies.

"When you say something long enough, it suddenly becomes fact," Hausman said on the House floor April 30. "The governor didn't argue emergency for the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. The two major issues in this bill are fixing leaky roofs and catching up on transportation. If there's anything that needs to be done, it's those things."

The governor's greatest disappointment was that \$2 million for flood relief in Browns Valley, a city on the state's western edge, was included in the bonding bill when the committee had been warned the bill would be vetoed even

with the inclusion. Pawlenty said the Browns Valley mayor "pleaded" with the Legislature to put the appropriation in a separate bill. Relief dollars were not in the governor's bonding recommendations because the issue came forth after his plan was put together.

But to get money to that city, supporters put a bill on a fast track to passage.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth), [HF2433](#) would provide \$2 million to the city for help in its rebuilding efforts. It was approved in the House Finance Committee May 3 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee.

The Senate, however, was quicker to act. In a procedural move, rules were suspended for consideration of [SF2236](#), sponsored by Langseth. It passed the Senate 62-0.

The House reconvened and declared an urgency to consider the bill. Through a set of procedural moves, the House laid the Senate bill on the table and brought up the House bill.

[Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers) successfully amended the bill to provide \$600,000 to Rogers and \$74,000 to Warroad to help with

Bonding veto continued on page 22

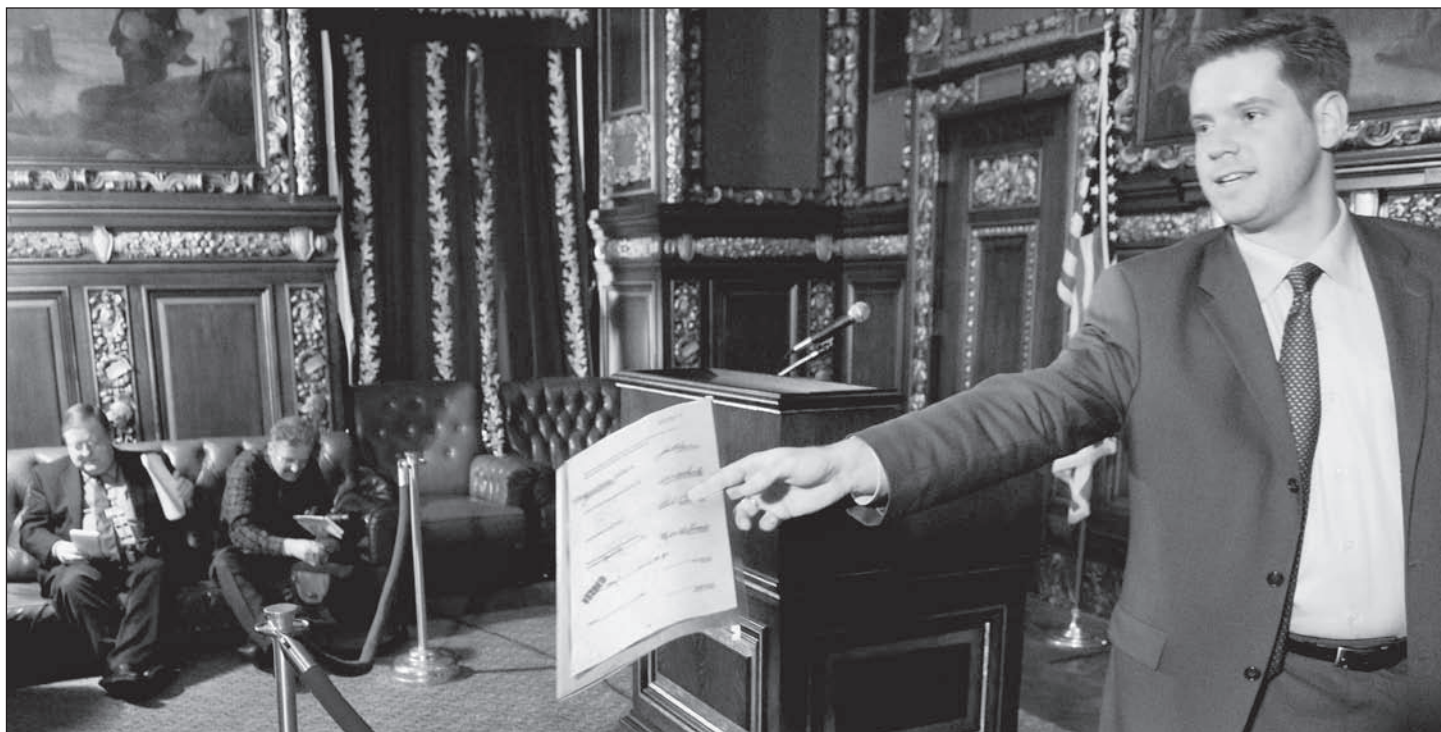


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Following the governor's May 1 news conference, Brian McClung, Gov. Tim Pawlenty's director of communications, holds out the veto the governor put to the capital investment bill.

Environment and energy funding

Conference report sets slightly larger price tag on clean waters, renewable power

By Nick Busse

After some late-night deliberations, a flurry of amendments and a shuffling of numbers, House and Senate conferees hammered out an agreement on the Omnibus Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Finance Bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill ([HF2410/SF2096*](#)) would boost funding to clean up state waters and invest in renewable energy. The conference committee report keeps those priorities but attaches a slightly larger price tag: \$441 million in net General Fund spending, up \$9.6 million from the original House proposal.

The conference committee adopted its report one day after Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed the session's omnibus capital investment finance bill, arguing it was too large. Addressing the possible threat of a veto on her own bill, Anderson said committee members and staff had made efforts to accommodate the governor's funding requests, and she hoped there would be no line-item vetoes.

"We're frustrated that we haven't gotten anything that I consider a commitment in return," Anderson said of discussions with Pawlenty's staff.

Committee member [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) replied that the former Republican majority had never received a promise from the governor not to veto a bill, either.

The bill now heads back to the House and Senate floors, where it is expected to be taken up within days.

Funding changes

Key changes were made to the bill's energy funding provisions.

Pawlenty's "E85 Everywhere" initiative, which would offer grants to expand the number of ethanol fueling stations in

the state, was cut significantly, down to \$3 million over the biennium. In his budget recommendations, the governor had called for twice that amount.

Ozment expressed disappointment with the committee's decision to cut funding for the program, but Anderson said the money was needed for Clean Water Legacy programs, which she said were underfunded by the governor.

A renewable hydrogen power initiative sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) also saw its funding slashed, from \$10 million in the House's original bill to \$4 million in the conference report.

Similarly, the report cancels \$3.1 million in General Fund money set aside in the House bill for a revolving loan program for rural wind power; however, the program would get \$2 million in non-General Fund money.

Environment and natural resources funding proposals in the House version of the bill were increased in the conference report, with an extra \$11.4 million for the Department of Natural Resources, \$4.5 million for the Board of Water and Soil Resources and \$1.8 million for the Pollution Control Agency.

Policy changes

The conference report incorporates much of the original House language on environment and natural resources policy, with some significant changes.


A venison donation program for deer hunters was adopted after House and Senate conferees compromised on a method of funding the program. Under the approved

language, hunters would have the option to make a \$1, \$3 or \$5 voluntary donation when they renew their licenses. Additionally, beginning March 1, 2008, a \$1 surcharge would be added to all bonus licenses. The bill appropriates \$160,000 from the General Fund to help pay for the program until the surcharge takes effect.

A much fought-over provision that would have prohibited the DNR from renewing minnow-farming licenses on water bodies subject to certain federal protective easements was reduced to include only a policy recommendations report, to be prepared by the DNR and presented to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2008.

A provision that would tighten the "de minimis" requirements for land developers to replace wetlands was amended to apply only to the 11-county metropolitan area, which includes Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Sherburne, Washington and Wright counties.

Other policy changes include:

- a controversial ban on 4X4 truck trails on state lands in Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties was amended by [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley) to include only the latter three counties;
- a \$4 million appropriation to the St. Paul Port Authority for preliminary work on a biomass-fueled power plant to be connected to the Rock-Tenn recycling facility now comes with the caveat that a citizen advisory group must be allowed to have input on the project;
- Winona County may build, own and operate a wind power electric generation facility; and
- by January of each year, Xcel Energy must request from the Manitoba Hydro power company certain information regarding the socioeconomic status of any community that is a signatory to the Northern Flood Agreement, including South Indian Lake, in Canada. 

Threat of veto removed from bill

Omnibus public safety bill takes detour to governor's desk

By CRAIG GREEN

Very close to a gubernatorial veto, a \$2 billion conference committee report received House and Senate approval May 3, and is now expected to be signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

As it stands, [HF829*/SF1992](#), sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), would provide funding for, among others, the court systems, Department of Corrections, Office of Justice Programs, Board of Public Defense, Sentencing Guidelines Commission and Human Rights Commission.

Under the plan, district courts would receive \$5 million for an additional six judgeships, while the drug courts would receive \$4.1 million to maintain their budgets. The Board of Public Defense would receive \$135.8 million, which includes funds for 34 new full-time attorneys, and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension would receive \$1.9 million for approximately 15 new forensics scientists.

Per the governor's request, the Department

of Corrections budget, which is slightly more than \$936 million, would include additional funding for health costs, utility fees, probation caseload reduction and reimbursement for housing short-term offenders.

Policy changes include an increase in penalties for theft of copper wiring and stronger protections for victims of sexual assault. Victims of domestic violence who fear future abuse if they remain at their residence would be allowed to terminate a lease, while restrictions and penalties for violating a domestic abuse no contact order are strengthened.

Budget concerns

Compensation, one of the main differences between the House and Senate, was set at 3 percent across the board, including the Department of Corrections, which had been hoping for a 4.25 percent increase. Deputy Commissioner Dennis Benson said that with those numbers, the department would be short \$8.4 million and between 140 and 160 full-time positions could be cut to make up the difference.

(An additional \$5 million was eventually included to maintain staffing levels.)

[Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield) unsuccessfully made a motion to amend the bill by taking \$4 million from the Office of Justice Programs to provide support for the DOC. Though both chairs asked Neuville to reconsider his motion, he felt the adjustment needed to be made.

Veto concern

Before the House and Senate signed off on the bill, there was a very real prospect that the bill would be vetoed. It all hinged on whether the bill included the "good faith" insurance practices provision.

Later that night, after a joint meeting with members of the House, Senate and the governor's office, it was agreed to send the bill back to the conference committee, where the "good faith" provision would be removed. Both chambers are expected to pass the new report May 4 and send it to the governor for his approval.

Originally in [HF1251](#), sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), the provision would require insurers to act in good faith in responding to liability claims and permits recovery of damages by anyone harmed by the failure to act in good faith.

In a letter read by [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), Pawlenty warned that if the bill included the "good faith" section, he would send it back. Pawlenty said, "This bill will be vetoed swiftly because of the provision related to 'good faith insurance.'"

As he made a motion to return the report back to the conference committee, Seifert said that the bill had a lot of good things in it, but it was also missing some important elements other members wanted back in.

Among those provisions was Emily's Law, which would reduce the age a juvenile could be charged as an adult from 14 to 13; a provision that would relax the requirements of serving a restraining order; and stronger penalties for repeat sex offenders.


The bill passed by a vote of 82-52. 



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The omnibus public safety bill would provide funding for, among others, the court systems, Department of Corrections, Office of Justice Programs, Board of Public Defense, Sentencing Guidelines Commission and Human Rights Commission.

From producer to consumer

Minnesota Grown highlights a growing list of products

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

When late August rolls around, [Rep. Ron Shimanski](#) (R-Silver Lake) will likely be picking apples in his orchard, or selling produce at one of several farmers markets in the area. He is also among the growing list of producers who rely on a program offered through the [Department of Agriculture](#) to help market their produce — [Minnesota Grown](#).

No doubt, corn and soybeans contribute significantly to the state's economy; but apple orchards, pick-your-own berry farms, Christmas tree farms, sales of specialty meats like elk, and even wine producers are increasingly making their mark on the economy. The blue and green Minnesota Grown label is seen as an important component, drawing consumer attention to products grown or produced in Minnesota.

Its tagline "Fresh from your Neighbor" explains it all. When a consumer buys a product displaying the label, they are buying into a network of local-grower-to-consumer products, said Paul Hugunin, Department of Agriculture marketing specialist.

The state began to fund the Minnesota Grown program 20 years ago after the department bought into an idea from fruit and vegetable growers wanting to help consumers differentiate an apple grown in Minnesota from one grown in California.

Hugunin and Brian Erickson have been staffing the program almost since its inception. And with input from an advisory board, representing 11 different grower and producer associations, they act as a two-person marketing team promoting the use of the label and the products it is affixed.

"There's so much to be done regarding promoting local foods," Hugunin said.

In the near future, Minnesota Grown products will become more identifiable at the grocery store, and restaurants are joining in with the branding concept as well. The

Heartland Food Network is working with Minnesota Grown to use and promote sustainably produced food in different food venues, including restaurants.

Growing numbers

State statute governs use of the label: it can be used on a product only if 80 percent of the agricultural product is grown, raised, processed or manufactured in the state.

If program participation numbers tell the story, there is little dispute about its success.

Hugunin said the number of producers licensed to use the Minnesota Grown label has increased from 758 in 2003 to 917 in 2006. "We're still receiving 2007 applications, but that (number) will almost certainly pass the 917 received last year," he said.

Although the program receives some General Fund money, it is augmented by a license fee that growers and producers pay for use of the logo and point-of-sale materials. Legislation proposed this year would raise the fee from \$5 to \$20. The added revenue would allow for development of a new Minnesota Grown organics label and more promotion, especially television spots to be aired in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The request for a fee increase came from program participants. A member of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division, Shimanski voted for

MN Grown continued on page 23



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Jill Marckel, right, and her son, Jeremy, of Chase Brook Natural, work their booth April 21 at the St. Paul Farmers Market. They sell Minnesota Grown meat products produced on their farm in Milaca.

Behind the scenes

Money aimed at support staff would help students in need

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

A 15-year-old girl walked into his counseling office and asked [Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley) how she could go live with her dad because her mom's boyfriend told her, "I was starting to look better than my mom."

This is not an unusual occurrence for the first-term legislator in his professional role as a licensed high school counselor in Roseville.

Tillberry, who has been with the school district for 11 years, said support staff try to be preventative in approaching student problems, yet with the increasing caseload, they don't always have the time to be as effective as they would like. Often they are in crisis mode trying to deal with problems between students that might have been festering for years and then finally blow up.

And with Minnesota's student-to-counselor ratios falling to 49th in the nation at 800:1, according to Tillberry, it is harder than ever to deal with problems that arise.

The Minnesota School Counselors Association recommends a 250:1 ratio, and the ratio for school psychologists to students is 1,000:1. At some schools, that ratio would be a drastic improvement. "During my last six years at Roseville High School, I was the only psychologist for 2,200 students," said Ralph Maves, a former school psychologist.

Included in the omnibus E-12 education finance bill ([HF6](#)) is a provision that would amend the safe school levy to allow school districts to levy \$30 times the district's adjusted per pupil unit; intermediate school districts could levy \$35 per pupil unit. Currently the amount for both is \$27. This would provide \$253,715 to the Roseville district.

The Senate bill ([SF295](#)) would increase the amount to \$37 for intermediate districts only.

In the past, the levy has been used for paying for a school liaison officer and drug prevention courses, such as DARE. The bill would add

licensed support staff to permissible fund use.

"If we don't increase funding, the health and safety of our students is in jeopardy," Tillberry said.

Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St.Cloud) agrees that support staff is needed but on a more limited scale. "It's striking a balance. I'm not opposed to counselors or school psychiatrists, but it has to be a close partnership with parents and guardians."

Counselors

Tillberry said that when children have problems, no matter the size, they often see only the most extreme option: suicide. "My job is trying to get kids to think about all the opportunities, or all the alternatives to that one choice."

Depression and suicidal thoughts have become some of the top problems that Tillberry tackles during the school year. He once had 17 straight weeks with at least one student a week coming to him with suicidal thoughts.

Drug use and relationship problems, either at school or at home, are other difficulties facing students, Tillberry said. When students cannot find the help they need at home, one of the places they turn to is school support staff.

"I had a girl who wanted to hurt herself; she had a plan worked out for after school," he said. "After an initial assessment, we recommended that a parent pick her up and bring her to the emergency room. Her parent's response was, 'I have bread in the oven now. Do I have to come right away?'"

Tillberry said students often come with an academic problem that often turns out to be a problem at home or in school. "We do career, social and emotional and academic counseling. Please don't be fooled into thinking that student support services only deals with careers."

Psychologists

Maves said there is overlap between school psychologists and school counselors. Typically, there are more psychologists at the elementary and preschool level, and they will work with the whole classroom. They work more closely with special education students



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Licensed school counselor Kristian Moe discusses post-high school educational opportunities with a student at Highland Park Senior High School in St. Paul.

Support continued on page 23

Traditionally speaking

Language immersion programs look to keep past alive

By SONJA HEGMAN

Brendan Fairbanks knows how to calm down his students.

With a puppet in hand, his young students snap to attention. The puppet tells the children to jump, stand up and sit down. They're playing Simon Says, but it might not be obvious right away to an outsider because the class is taught in the Ojibwe language.

The Dakota Ojibwe Language Revitalization Alliance is working to ensure the language continues on with children through language immersion programs. It was started by the Native American Leaders Circle, a group of early childhood professional American Indian women who needed a leadership project.

With fewer than 15 fluent speakers of Dakota in the state, teachers say now is the time to save the language.

"We only have 10 years to save the language," said Margaret Boyer, director of the Alliance of Early Childhood Professionals. "Every week an elder dies."

By age 3, most children surrounded by words produce sentences as readily as laughter or tears, said Becky Beane, project manager of the Wicoie Nandagikendan Early Childhood Immersion Project, a part of the alliance.

"Young children don't learn languages, they absorb languages," Beane said. "Children have the capacity to learn several languages easily if they can interact and hear the languages in an everyday way."

So far, the alliance teaches children age 2 through kindergarten three hours a day each weekday. Leaders would like to expand to the first grade.

The alliance is made up of people associated with American Indian programs. Members are primarily from the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes, although other tribal members participate. The group examines strategies to ensure that adequate funding, resources and support are

available to ensure that revitalization of the Dakota and Ojibwe languages in urban areas and reservations are available, Boyer said.

A bill, [HF779](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield), would establish the Minnesota Indigenous Language Act and the Council on Indigenous Language to help ensure the survival of American Indian cultures and languages. It was approved

by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division and the House E-12 Education Committee, and now awaits action by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A companion bill, [SF586](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), was not included in the Senate omnibus E-12 Education bill ([SF2095](#)).

The Senate omnibus higher education finance bill ([SF1989](#)) contains \$300,000 in the next biennium to establish a Dakota language program at the University of Minnesota. That bill awaits conference committee action. The House and governor plans have zero funding.

The Wicoie Nandagikendan Urban Immersion Preschools Program began in January 2006 with a grant from the Administration for Native Americans. Because the future of native language is in the children, it is crucial to expose children to these languages at a young age, Boyer said. When Dakota or Ojibwe is not spoken in the home because of generations of language loss, schools and day care facilities offer an alternative opportunity to expose children to their heritage in a non-threatening environment.

Language continued on page 23



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Brendan Fairbanks teaches the Ojibwe and Dakota languages to students as part of the Wicoie Nandagikendan Early Childhood Language Immersion Project.

Tracking new laws, vetoes

Once a bill passes the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the governor for consideration. The governor has several options when considering a bill:

- sign the bill and it will become law;
- veto the bill;
- line-item veto individual items within an appropriations bill; or
- do nothing, which can have two different effects. The timing of these actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In the first year of the biennium, the governor has three days from the time of presentment to veto a bill. If the governor doesn't sign the bill within this time frame,

it will become law with or without his signature. (Sundays are not counted in the three-day time limit, but holidays are.)

Only on appropriations bills can the governor exercise the line-item veto authority. This allows the governor to eliminate the appropriation items to which he or she objects. As with all vetoes (save pocket vetoes, which occur in the days after the Legislature has adjourned sine die), the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is three days after the governor receives the bill.

Policy items contained in appropriations bills may not be line-item vetoed. In order

to veto such an item, the governor is required to veto the entire bill.

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special session of the Legislature anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next session.

The governor's veto authority is outlined in the Minnesota Constitution (Article IV, Section 23).

Key: CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File; *=denotes bill language signed into law.

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 8* | 17 | Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006. | 1/30/2007 | |
| 2 | 110* | 38 | Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact enacted. | 2/20/2007 | |
| 3 | 4 | 4* | Renewable energy standard established. | 2/22/2007 | |
| 4 | 87* | 257 | St. Paul Asian Pacific Cultural Center predesign expenditures authorized. | 3/2/2007 | |
| 5 | 160* | 103 | Help America Vote Act account appropriations transfer authorized. | 3/14/2007 | |
| 6 | 935 | 736* | Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed Minnesota Inter-county Association. | 3/21/2007 | |
| 7 | 1425 | 1499* | Students authorized to participate in high school league-sponsored activities after completing licensed treatment programs. | 3/20/2007 | |
| 8 | 1008* | 985 | Child placement background check requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 9 | 1364 | 1168* | Building contractors insurance requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 10 | 1678 | 1294* | Public Utilities Commission electronic filing authorized. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 11 | 736* | 636 | Ambulance service personnel longevity award and incentive program renamed the Cooper/Sams volunteer ambulance program. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 12 | 1441* | 792 | Limited purpose trust companies nonsubstantive term changes provided. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 13 | 1200* | 983 | Revisor's bill. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 14 | 163 | 60* | Duluth postemployment benefits accounts authorized, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 15 | 1429 | 1332* | Meeker County economic development authority membership increased to nine. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 16 | 274* | 227 | Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 17 | 1432 | 1133* | St. Louis County civil service director provisions modified. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 18 | 1004* | 809 | Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 19 | 878* | 1263 | Board of Animal Health consultants expanded to include the commissioner of agriculture. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 20 | 472* | 239 | Renewable energy production incentives eligibility period extended. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 21 | 1594* | 952 | National Guard reenlistment bonus program expanded, and academic awards provided. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 22 | 448* | 1912 | Auto insurance verification mailing program repealed. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 23 | 539* | 600 | Trunk highway Route No. 145 technical correction provided, and Legislative Route No. 262 removed. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 24 | 2090* | 2111 | Backflow prevention in recreational camping areas requirements limited. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 25 | 1490* | 1419 | Scott County personnel rules adoption authorized, and veterans' preference administration provided. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 26 | 1193 | 1098* | Beltrami County; county recorder appointment process provided. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 27 | 1105 | 1017* | Charter commission expense limitations increased for specified cities. | | 4/30/2007 |
| 28 | 1300 | 1069* | Motor fuels unavailability notice required, and penalty waiver provided for retailers who do not carry ethanol or biodiesel blends under certain circumstances. | 4/30/2007 | |

Governor's Desk continued on next page

*The legislative bill marked with an asterisk denotes the file submitted to the governor.

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|---|----------|----------|
| 29 | 2135 | 1949* | Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission duties, powers, and procedures modified. | | |
| 30 | 293* | 450 | Environment and natural resources funding provided, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources meeting requirements modified. | | |
| 31 | 881* | 981 | Metropolitan Land Planning act and related statutes modified, and erroneous and obsolete references corrected. | | |
| 32 | 958 | 846* | State agencies deficiency funding provided, and money appropriated. | 5/2/2007 | |
| 33 | 1294 | 1483* | Minnesota Council on Disability sunset repealed. | | |
| 34 | 1872 | 1807* | Hennepin County conflicts of interest regulated for certain Hennepin Healthcare System personnel. | | |
| 35 | 1267 | 1236* | State employees technical and housekeeping changes provided. | | |
| 36 | 1016 | 420* | Forest pest control measures provided, approved firewood required on land administered by the commissioner of natural resources, and sale and distribution of firewood regulated. | | |
| 37 | 1444 | 1105* | Health risk limits and reporting required for certain perfluorochemicals. | | |
| 38 | 886* | 2157 | Omnibus bonding bill providing capital improvements funding, issuing bonds, and appropriating money. | | 5/1/2007 |
| 39 | 1865 | 1787* | Workers' compensation coverage federal exclusions information and report required. | | |
| 40 | 993 | 1735* | Radon control provisions adoption required relating to building codes. | | |
| 41 | 1990 | 1790* | Adverse health care events reporting provisions modified. | | |
| 42 | 1442 | 1266* | Hospital emergency rooms required to provide emergency contraception, prophylactic antibiotics and information to sexual assault victims. | | |
| 43 | 465 | 321* | Independent nonprofit firefighting corporations included for joint exercise of powers agreements. | | |
| 44 | 2056 | 1920* | Financial institutions debt, charges, expenses, electronic terminals, and investments regulated. | | |
| 45 | 2227* | 1925 | Omnibus agricultural and veterans affairs bill appropriating money; providing for NextGen energy; and changing veterans provisions. | | |

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

APRIL 27 - MAY 3, 2007
HOUSE FILES 2457 - 2463

Friday, April 27

HF2457-Olson (R)

Finance

Big Lake ice arena funding provided.

HF2458-Eken (DFL)

Finance

Native American juvenile treatment center construction funding provided.

Tuesday, May 1

HF2459-Tschumper (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Pesticides application information access expanded.

Thursday, May 3

HF2460-Dill (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Provisional driver's license additional training requirements specified, and criminal penalty imposed for falsifying requirements.

HF2461-Gardner (DFL)

Finance

Rice Creek North Regional Trail funding provided.

HF2462-Tingelstad (R)

Finance

Capital project grants to political subdivisions criteria modified.

HF2463-Seifert (R)

Finance

Browns Valley flood relief provided and flood mitigation projects authorized.

Bonding veto continued from page 15

tornado damage incurred last year. The bill passed 120-8, and will now be returned to the Senate for action.

The governor didn't agree with the use of one-time money proposed in the bonding bill. Hausman said spending on badly needed infrastructure is a wise use for one-time cash that shouldn't go toward balancing the state's operating budget.

"Waiting until next year on these projects adds an additional \$40 million of inflationary costs to these projects," she said.

Adding that she has "profound disappointment" in the governor's decision, Hausman said the state is far behind in its transportation investment. The bill would have provided state matching funds for federal transit

corridor projects totaling \$53.6 million.

"The bill was important to the entire state," she said.

All of the governor's recommendations — including one with a higher appropriation — were included in the bill, with the exception of money to buy three available parcels for parking next to the state-owned Stassen building in St. Paul.

Those projects were:

- \$37 million to pay half the construction cost of a new Duluth arena;
- \$12.7 million for repairs to the Department of Transportation building in St. Paul;
- \$3.9 million to provide upgrades to and replace fences, razor wire, security lighting and cameras, and \$2.2 million to replace the ventilation system that has mold infestation at Oak Park Heights prison;

- \$1.5 million to reduce the flow of clear water into the wastewater system at the Minnesota Zoo; and
- \$200,000 for phase three of the Stillwater flood control project.

Langseth said that for the second time in four years, there may not be a bonding bill, further putting the state behind on public projects.

"It appears to be a repeat of 2004," he said.

The bill could be saved by a veto override, but it would require a two-thirds vote by the House, and the same in the Senate.

"We don't know what happens next," Hausman said. "Putting a bare bones bill together is hard to do because we need 81 votes to pass the bill." 🗽

MN Grown continued from page 18

the increase, which is included in [HF2227](#), the omnibus agriculture and veterans finance bill.

"They produce some high quality market materials that are free to the members. It does a great job," Shimanski said. "If we want to make this program grow, and be more valuable to the producers and more widely known to our customers, we gotta put a little bit more of an investment into the program."

The House, Senate and Gov. Tim Pawlenty also propose an increase to the program's base funding.

Support continued from page 19

as well, and draw part of their salary from special education funding. They also work with student testing on an individual basis for intelligence, social and emotional testing.

"Counselors are often involved with kids on a global situation, and psychologists are typically involved with intensive intervention, and also look at data-driven decisions," said Sally Baas, professor and director of SEAT at Concordia University in St. Paul.

Maves said it should be emphasized that school psychologists are some of the best researchers in school district. Data-driven research allows schools to make informed decisions as to where to focus intervention strategies.

"Children sometimes come to school not ready to learn because they don't have enough

The funding would provide staff the "ability to do a lot more work with grocery stores and restaurants than we've ever been able to do before," Hugunin said.

From grower to consumer

Whether it's consumers with health concerns, people interested in buying local or producers seeking to market their products themselves, the number of farmers markets are growing across the state.

Hugunin said these markets have always been an important component to promoting Minnesota Grown produce.

Prized by market enthusiasts and those seeking locally grown alternatives, the [Minnesota Grown Directory](#) of markets, products and services is annually sells out.

In 2006, 170,000 directories were distributed in less than six months. This year, Erickson said, they bumped up the production run another 5,000. The online version of the directory can be found at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/MNGROWN>.

There is a \$40 charge for those wanting to be listed in the directory, and the number of directory participants has increased from 532 in 2003 to 663 in 2007. 🗿

food, not enough sleep or the parents are using chemicals," she said. "The kids are impacted before they get to school and are not ready to learn. School psychologists are there to provide consultation with teachers to help make the student successful."

Baas said school psychologists perform psycho-educational assessments to determine what eligibility students have for special education services, help with high stakes testing, consultations with teachers, and provide mental health services for students with stress, anxiety, and academic difficulties.

Parents

"I heard Rep. Tillberry say on the floor 'Our kids need to have social workers and

programs' and I kept thinking, 'No, what they need is caring and involved adults in their life,'" Gottwalt said.

There is a concern that schools are moving beyond their core mission of educating children, to more of a social service, he said. "Parents are the first teachers and the most influential teachers, and allowing them to not be parents is a dangerous road to go down."

Gottwalt has heard from teachers and school administrators who say schools are being asked to do too much. "They want to focus on education and outcomes, but instead they are dealing with mental issues, health issues and nutritional issues."

He said schools would not need to deal with behavioral problems if parents were doing the job and getting their children ready for the classroom. 🗿

Language continued from page 20

Three Minneapolis preschools are currently operated through this program, with plans for a fourth underway, Beane said.

Because there is not always an overlap between childcare professionals and fluent speakers, each classroom has a licensed child care professional in the room at all times, though he or she may not speak the language. An auxiliary program exists to help these caregivers and parents further instruction in the language.

Other world languages — like Gaelic, Welsh and Hebrew — have been brought back from the brink of extinction as a spoken

language by language immersion and bilingual educational investments. The Canadian government and the church community have put together extensive resources for native language revitalization, Beane said.

"We do everything you would do in a 'regular' school, but we have to translate it into Ojibwe and Dakota," Boyer said.

But each day, the class starts with a circle and the lighting of sage to help the children focus, Boyer said. This is followed by the children sticking their names onto the chart under how they feel, followed by a game, before delving into the curriculum.

Beane said the immersion program does

not just teach the language, but it teaches science, math and reading based on the state's curriculum content standards. All curriculum is conducted in the language of the particular program.

Anishinabe Academy, a K-9 public school in Minneapolis, is a Native American Magnet School focusing on academic achievement, Ojibwe and Dakota language, and culture. It has both Ojibwe and Dakota immersion sites.

Jennifer Bendickson, a staff member of the alliance, said the program helps increase self-esteem and gives them an identity.

"The public schools teach them nothing about the culture," she said. 🗿

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211 Capitol296-2314

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Use and reuse

| | |
|---|---------|
| State recycling rate, as percent..... | 48.5 |
| State rank..... | 2 |
| National average, as percent..... | 28.5 |
| Average increase in state recycling each of last three years, as percent..... | 1.56 |
| State percent increase since 1989..... | 25.5 |
| Municipal solid waste growth increase in state, as percent in 2005..... | 1.8 |
| Population growth, as percent..... | 1.2 |
| Tons of municipal solid waste created by "average" Minnesotan in 2005..... | 1.17 |
| Percent increase from 2004..... | 0.6 |
| Millions of tons of waste recycled in state in 2005, as estimate..... | 2.5 |
| Percent increase from 2004..... | 3 |
| Percent increase since 1989, as approximate..... | 300 |
| Metric tons of greenhouse gas emission reduction for every 2.5 million recycled tons..... | 1.6 |
| Minnesota jobs created directly by recycling..... | 8,700 |
| Jobs indirectly created by recycling..... | 19,000 |
| Billions in gross estimated economic activity each year created by recycling..... | \$3.48 |
| Estimated state taxes brought in each year by recycling industry, in millions..... | \$93 |
| Number of curbside recycling programs in the state..... | 730 |
| State rank..... | 3 |
| Percent of state residents, as approximate, who have curbside recycling..... | 75 |
| Millions of trees, as estimate, conserved annually because of statewide recycling efforts..... | 5.75 |
| Tons of coal not needed each year in state, as approximate, because of recycling..... | 232,000 |
| Tons of steel recycled in Minnesota in 2005..... | 388,562 |
| Tons of resources saved because of this..... | 781,010 |
| Mattresses and box springs collected in 2005 by the Northeast Minnesota Mattress Recycling Pilot Project..... | 6,373 |
| Cubic yards of landfill space saved..... | 753 |
| Pounds recycled in the State Office Building in March 2007..... | 21,136 |
| Per capita amount, in pounds..... | 74.4 |
| Pounds recycled in the State Capitol in March 2007..... | 18,416 |
| Per capita amount, in pounds..... | 52.3 |
| Average, per capita amount, in pounds, in 21 state buildings..... | 21.2 |

Sources: Recycling Association of Minnesota; Minnesota State Government Resource Recovery Program; Report on 2005 SCORE Programs, A summary of waste management in Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, December 2006.

— M. Cook

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SESSION WEEKLY

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THE PARENT LEGISLATOR
A QUESTION OF DEDICATION
SPEEDING TO A DEAD END?

HF2464 - HF2475

SESSION WEEKLY

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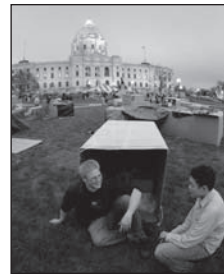
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On the cover: Rep. Rick Hansen and his son, Evan, look out one of the French doors in the House Retiring Room while sharing a bag dinner during a floor session that went into the evening.

— Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

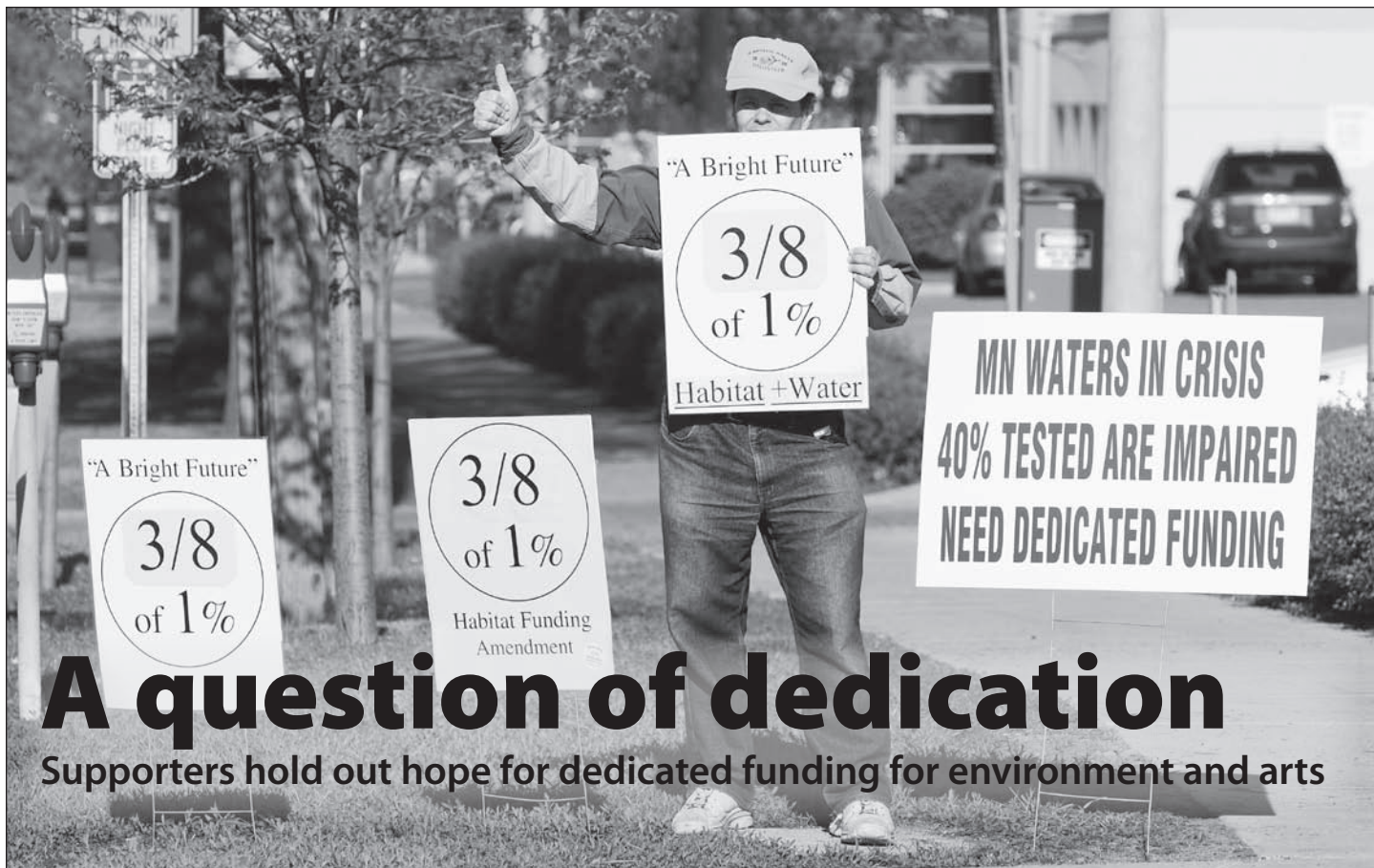


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Kevin Ausland, a member of Minnesota Sportsmen for Change, greeted legislators and staff May 10 with his message supporting a dedicated funding outdoors constitutional amendment.

By Nick Busse

With several major budget bills in limbo and the specter of a special session looming, it might seem unlikely that legislators could make short work of a bill that has provided more than seven years' worth of controversy.

Nevertheless, a long sought-after and much embattled measure to establish dedicated funding for the environment and the arts is progressing through the House with surprising speed — and the Senate's version isn't far behind.

[House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) sponsors [HF2285](#), which would propose a constitutional amendment to raise the state sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent for a period of 25 years beginning July 1, 2009, and divvy up the new revenue as follows:

- 25 percent for fish and wildlife habitat;
- 25 percent for protecting and restoring surface waters;

- 15 percent for parks and trails;
- 15 percent for protecting drinking water sources;
- 10 percent for arts and cultural heritage purposes; and
- 10 percent for the Legislature to appropriate at its discretion for the purposes listed above.

Sertich's bill is a new variation of a proposal

that first came to light nearly a decade ago and has been praised, ridiculed, tweaked and argued over ever since. Still, Sertich believes that his bill, which if implemented would raise more than \$280 million in its first year alone, will pass this session.

"We're gaining momentum," he told the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division May 9.

Indeed, just a few hours earlier a similar measure, [SF6](#), sponsored by [Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller](#) (DFL-Mpls), won the approval of the Senate Taxes Committee, where it had stalled earlier in the session. The Senate Rules and Administration Committee approved it later that day.

Support for dedicated funding also received a boost from Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office earlier in the week when the governor endorsed a [report](#) from the Conservation Legacy Council calling for the immediate passage of dedicated funding legislation as part of a

First Reading continued on page 4

new conservation strategy. The report also indicated that the state's overall conservation spending had declined by approximately \$100 million since 2001.

With the stars seemingly aligning in their favor, proponents of dedicated funding are optimistic about its chances.

"I think this will be the year," said Molly Schultz, policy director for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership.

Schultz and her organization represent a fraction of the broad coalition of environmentalists, outdoor enthusiasts and others who have rallied around the issue in recent years. According to Sertich, these groups have banded together for a common purpose: to create a brighter future for Minnesota.

"It's really about vision. ... You have to think a quarter-century into the future about what we are going to leave our children and grandchildren," he said.

Lingering doubts

Serious questions remain to be worked through, however.

In order to take effect, the three-eighths of 1 percent sales tax increase would have to be proposed as an amendment to the state constitution, placed on the statewide ballot and approved by a majority of voters in 2008. This raises the issue of whether Minnesotans would support increasing a tax on themselves. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) doesn't think so.

"I think if you put this on the ballot with this huge tax increase that's going to pay for arts and parks and trails and some of these other issues, I don't think you're going to have the support to pass it," he said.

Hackbarth supports dedicated funding for the environment, but said the Legislature should dedicate a portion of the tax that already exists — not raise it. Last year, he sponsored a dedicated funding bill that fizzled in conference committee on the basis of that very issue.

Hackbarth also said that the bill in its current form deviates from its original purpose. When it was first conceived in the late-1990s, the focus of the bill was to provide dedicated funding for the state's natural resources, particularly fish and wildlife habitat, which he said are experiencing a funding crisis. He said there is no similar crisis in arts funding.

Naturally, supporters of the arts and culture portion of the bill disagree. David Kelliher, legislative liaison for the Minnesota Historical Society, said arts and humanities



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

The House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division listens as Larry Redmond *right*, representing Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, and Thomas Proehl, executive director of the board, speak in support of a bill that would increase funding for the arts.

are as drastically underfunded right now as the environment.

"There is an urgency in the historical and cultural world to preserve a flow of funding," he said.

For his part, Sertich contends that maintaining the current bill is "critical" to securing the support of a broad range of advocacy groups that will play a crucial role in getting Minnesotans to support a sales tax increase, should it ever make it on the ballot.

If passed by the Legislature, Schultz said the MEP and other organizations would likely mount a massive media campaign in support of the measure. In order to do this successfully, she said it needs to pass this year to ensure adequate time and resources would be available to drum up public support in time for the 2008 general election.

"It's going to require a campaign, and we don't want to have to start fundraising in May of 2008. We want to start fundraising in May of 2007," Schultz said.

Philosophical disagreement

Whether voters would approve the higher tax, some legislators philosophically disagree with the idea of dedicated funding. Among them is [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley), chairman of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

"I just don't like this method of budgeting through the constitution. That's our job here in the Legislature," Eken said.

Eken isn't alone. Several members of the Senate Taxes Committee voiced the same concern before voting not to approve

Pogemiller's bill April 24. To break the impasse, Pogemiller let the committee amend the bill by changing its language so that the tax increase would be done statutorily, meaning that the governor — not the voters — would have to approve it. The maneuver worked, and committee approved the bill May 9; however, the Senate Rules and Administration Committee later amended the bill by putting it back in its original form.

Eken, who voted against Sertich's bill when it came before his committee May 7, said he agrees with the goal of dedicated funding, but not the method. He believes that the dedicated funding option merely provides the Legislature with a way to raise taxes without shouldering the responsibility for it.

Moreover, Eken believes that many of his fellow legislators agree but will vote for the dedicated funding bill anyway because they feel "boxed-in" by the governor's pledge to veto tax increases.

"I think there are some that are supporting it that philosophically don't like it but feel like, 'Well, what else are we going to do?'" he said, adding that dedicated funding for the environment and the arts begs the question of whether similar measures for health care, nursing homes and schools would come next.

"If we start going down this road, should we put everything into dedicated funding and then we don't have to do the job here?"

Sertich's bill is scheduled to be before the House Finance Committee May 11, while Pogemiller's awaits action by the full Senate. The Legislature's constitutional adjournment deadline is May 21. 🏛️

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held May 3-10 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Ag, vets bill signed by the governor

**Signed
by
the
governor**

In front of representatives from various veterans and military organizations, Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a new law May 4 that will appropriate \$170 million in the 2008-09

biennium for veterans and military programs and agriculture spending.

"This bill includes key initiatives we proposed to help veterans, active military members and their families," Pawlenty said. "It also focuses on renewable energy development and important programs to keep Minnesota agriculture growing."

The law will provide about \$65 million for veterans and military programs, a nearly 70 percent increase from their current funding. Of that, nearly \$3.4 million is allocated for communication and outreach to help inform veterans of available benefits. As the state prepares for nearly 3,000 returning active-duty National Guard members in late-summer, \$1.5 million is allocated to continue reintegration programming.

Also provided in the new law, sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), is more than \$104 million for agriculture-related initiatives, including formation of the Next Generation Energy Board, which will work to achieve the Legislature's goal of at least 25 percent of energy consumed in the state to come from renewable resources by 2025.

Two appropriations received a line-item [veto](#) from Pawlenty.

A \$1 million loan program for purchases of farm equipment for biomass crops was called "premature," and should be considered by the new Next Generation Energy Board, he said. In his veto letter, Pawlenty wrote: "While this new loan program for equipment may have merit in the future, we are only in the early stages of planning for our next generation of biofuels. It is difficult to predict future

equipment and capital needs of producers of such crops at this point."

Also redlined was a \$350,000 grant to the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, which Pawlenty said could be available through other bills moving through the process.

The bill has varying effective dates.

[HF2227*/SF1925/CH45](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

BANKING

Banking changes

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law signed May 4 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty will make changes to the regulation of financial institutions and fees for registering credit service organizations.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), changes include:

- raising a state chartered bank's borrowing limit from 25 percent to 35 percent of its total assets (Sec. 1);
- prohibiting civil penalties related to the bad check law from being assessed to customers on payday loan transactions (Secs. 2 and 3);
- removing the requirement that financial institutions located in other states notify the commissioner of commerce when establishing ATM machines in Minnesota (Sec. 4);
- allowing commercial banks, savings banks, savings associations and others to invest health savings account funds in transaction accounts (Sec. 5); and
- increasing registration fees for credit service organizations from \$100 to \$1,000 (Sec. 8).

The first three changes take effect Aug. 1, 2007; the health savings account language is effective May 5, 2007; and the fee increase takes effect July 1, 2007.

Kevin Murphy, deputy commerce commissioner, told a House committee that in certain cases related to payday loans the department has uncovered cases of defaulted loans where lenders could get a judgment double the amount of the loan. For consumer protection, the change will prevent this from happening in the future.

The registration fee increase is needed for the department to break even on costs associated with reviewing and approving credit service organization applications, he added.

[HF2056/SF1920*/CH44](#)

— P. OSTBERG

Correction

In the "Veto Reaction" story in the May 4 edition of Session Weekly, it was written that all but one of the governor's project recommendations were included in the bonding bill. All of his recommendations were included in the bill. We apologize for the error.

CONSUMERS

Radon gas protection

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Future homeowners will have some protection from radon gas in their newly built home, because of a required system installed to remove the gas. The bill was signed into law on

May 4 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the new law requires the labor and industry commissioner to adopt rules for radon control as part of the State Building Code for all new residential buildings. It takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

Having the protection system installed when a house is built will save homeowners up to \$5,000 from having to retrofit their home with the system, according to Norton. She said a system installed in a new home would cost roughly \$400.

Half of Minnesota counties are in the highest radon zones in the nation, and the remaining counties are in the second highest of the three radon zones, Norton said.

The danger from radon, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, is that the gas decays into radioactive particles that get trapped in your lungs when you breathe. Damage occurs to the lung tissue and leads to lung cancer.

[HF993/SF1735*/CH40](#)

— S. HARDING

CRIME

Getting gangs off the street

Gang members often hang out at the same location, either to do business or because it is a place where they feel safe. [HF49/SF493*](#), sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would allow a county or city attorney, the attorney general or any resident, to seek an injunction against a person or a group for the habitual use of a place for gang activities.

Violators would be subject to a fine between \$1,000 and \$10,000, and 10 to 30 days in jail.

"This bill would help put gang members out of business by removing them from their turf," Lesch said, adding that it has the support of Minneapolis Chief of Police Tim Dolan and St. Paul Chief of Police John Harrington.

Amended and approved [120-11](#) by the House on May 4, the bill was returned to the Senate, which did not concur with the change.

One provision that raised concern states that a person who owns or maintains a place used by a gang may also be a defendant in the suit. Some cautioned that there is a chance someone unable to get a gang to leave could get sued.

This was also major concern brought up by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley) when a conference committee met for the first time May 9. The original Senate bill would have provided a 60-day window for property owners to take action toward getting gangs to leave.

The Senate removed the wording giving any resident the right to bring a civil suit. Moua said this would pose public safety concerns for the individuals involved, and if public officials were solely responsible for bringing the civil suit, the bill would have more bite.

The conference committee was planning to meet again.

— C. GREEN

Reselling event tickets

Signed
by
the
governor

Minnesota will become an easier place to buy and sell event tickets.

On May 7, Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed into law a repeal of a 1963 law that made it a criminal offense to sell an event ticket for more than face value. The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), said that repealing the law would make Minnesota more attractive to those ticket reselling companies who want to move their businesses here, and consumers would win because the competition would bring down the price of tickets.

This also brings to a close an effort by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls). She began to work on getting the ticket scalping law repealed after watching police resources used to combat ticket resellers during the 1987 World Series, instead of attending to more serious, violent crimes throughout the city.

[HF189/SF372*/CH47](#)

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Electronic bullying unplugged

Signed
by
the
governor

Bullies have moved beyond pushing other children around and stealing their lunch money. They have branched out into the Internet and cell phones to make other students miserable.

School boards will be required to deal with this growing problem.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law adds electronic means to an existing statute that each school board must adopt a written policy prohibiting bullying.

Signed May 9 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

Bullying is taking place through Web sites that, for example, ask viewers to rank the least popular or ugliest student in school. Pictures and videos are also appearing on the Internet that are embarrassing or made to look like the victim is doing something illegal.

Before it passed the House [96-35](#) May 4, [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) said she presented an anti-hazing bill a few years back stemming from an incident at Roseville Area High School. "We have not had any hazing incidents since they had a policy and were prepared," she said.

Among those voting no was [Rep. Randy Demmer](#) (R-Hayfield), who said the Legislature should not do the work of a school board. "We have a rule in my school district banning cell phones from schools, and we didn't need a state law to do that."

[HF504/SF646*/CH53](#)

— S. HARDING

ENVIRONMENT

Chemicals' health risk limits

Signed
by
the
governor

Two chemicals manufactured and disposed of by 3M have been detected in eastern Twin Cities suburban water supplies and most recently in fish tested from a Minneapolis lake.

A new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 3, and effective the next day, requires the health commissioner to develop health risk limits for the chemicals and report to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2008, on the health effects. A status report is due Sept. 30, 2007.

Perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctane sulfonate were produced at 3M's Cottage Grove plant and used in products like Scotchgard. They were disposed of in various

waste sites throughout area landfills in the 1950s and 1960s.

"What we've learned is this chemical has probably been in our drinking water for decades, and contrary to what is being said by the industry, the long-term effects of constant exposure to people, to expecting women and children, are unknown," said [Rep. Karla Bigham](#) (DFL-Cottage Grove), who sponsored the law with [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport).

The law requires that by Aug. 1, 2007, the commissioner determine the health risk limits based on toxicity and exposure data.

[HF1444/SF1105*/CH37](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

Recycling e-waste

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law establishes a statewide system to help consumers recycle old TVs and other unwanted electronics devices — collectively referred to as e-waste.

Signed May 8 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the law requires consumer electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle an amount of devices proportional to the weight they sold during the previous year. [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) are the sponsors.

Under the law, manufacturers are required to collect an amount of devices equal to 80 percent of the weight of products sold during the previous year — except for the first year, in which the requirement is 60 percent. Devices collected outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area count for 1.5 times their actual weight. The law applies only to devices sold to households, not businesses.

In addition, manufacturers must pay a base fee of \$2,500 per year (\$5,000 in the first year), plus a variable fee ranging from 30 cents to 50 cents per pound of product for each pound they fall short of their target. Revenues from the fees will be used to fund recycling programs outside the 11-county metropolitan area.

Sailer said the bill uses a "manufacturers' responsibility" approach to recycling e-waste. Noting that the state's 2006 ban on disposing of such devices via the normal solid waste stream has resulted in illegal dumping in many counties, she said the bill is long overdue.

The law is effective May 9, 2007.

[HF854*/SF235/CH48](#)

— N. BUSSE

Firewood restricted on state lands

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law forbids visitors to state parks and forests from bringing their own firewood unless it comes from a source

approved by the [Department of Natural Resources](#).

Signed May 3 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the law is designed to prevent the spread of emerald ash borer and other invasive tree pests. [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids) are the sponsors.

The law makes it illegal to possess firewood on DNR-administered lands unless the wood is obtained from a distribution facility within such lands or purchased from a dealer who has been approved by the department. Violators would be subject to a \$100 civil penalty.

Hansen called the bill “another tool in the toolbox” to help manage the threat of invasive species like emerald ash borer, an Asian beetle that has devastated ash tree populations in Michigan and surrounding states.

Also included is a requirement that firewood sold or distributed across state boundaries, or more than 100 miles from its origin, include written information regarding the harvest locations of the wood by county and state. This portion of the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007; the rest is effective May 4, 2007.

[HF1016/SF420*/CH36](#)

— N. BUSSE

Environment funding

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law signed May 3 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty appropriates approximately \$23.4 million from the state’s environmental trust funds for a variety of projects relating to land, water and air protection.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law represents the recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#), which makes recommendations to the Legislature on how to use money from the state’s environmental trust funds — primarily, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives funding mostly from state lottery proceeds.

In brief, the law appropriates:

- \$14.8 million for land projects, including forest legacy conservation easements, Minnesota habitat corridors partnership continuation, metro conservation corridors continuation, and land acquisitions for state, metro and regional parks and trails;
- \$5.1 million for 15 water resource projects;
- \$2 million for natural resource information projects, including continuation of the county biological survey and soil survey; and
- \$160,000 to fund an “emerging issues” account.

The appropriations apply to fiscal year 2008.

RAISING AWARENESS



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Tyler Larson, left, and Harrison Nguyen, both juniors at John F. Kennedy High School in Bloomington, talk outside Larson’s cardboard home May 4 on the front lawn of the Capitol. The duo took part in the Box City Vigil to bring awareness of youth homelessness in Minnesota.

The commission is expected to recommend another set of appropriations for fiscal year 2009. The law takes effect July 1, 2007.

Also included is a provision, effective Aug. 1, 2007, that ensures all commission meetings are open to the public.

[HF293*/SF450/CH30](#)

— N. BUSSE

Environment finance bill signed

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill survived Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s veto pen May 8, but line-item vetoes trimmed more than \$1.4 million in spending provisions.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law boosts funding to clean up state waters and invest in renewable energy, appropriating nearly \$440 million from the general fund.

Five appropriations were stricken from the bill:

- \$1 million (half of the total appropriation) for the Center for Rural Policy and Development to fund grants for a rural wind energy assistance program;
- \$200,000 for storm water and sewer reconstruction in Gaylord;
- \$150,000 for a shade tree protection task force and grants;
- \$45,000 to Linden Hills Power and Light for preliminary engineering and design work; and

- \$10,000 to the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area Citizens Advisory Council for a park development project.

In his veto message, Pawlenty explained that these programs are either excessive, better funded through other means, or they duplicate programs and services that are already offered.

The law, most of which is effective July 1, 2007, increases funding for Clean Water Legacy programs through several state agencies, and includes new spending for the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency and Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Renewable energy programs feature prominently in the law, which includes \$3 million for the “E85 Everywhere” ethanol pump expansion initiative, \$4 million for a renewable hydrogen power initiative and a \$4 million appropriation to the St. Paul Port Authority for preliminary work on a biomass-fueled power plant to be connected to the Rock-Tenn recycling facility.

The law also includes a number of new policy initiatives, including:

- a venison donation program for deer hunters, funded by a \$1, \$3 or \$5 voluntary donation that may be added to deer hunting license renewals and a \$1 surcharge on all bonus deer licenses;
- a provision tightening the “de minimis” requirement for land developers to replace wetlands in the 11-county metropolitan

- area, effective May 9, 2007;
 - new restrictions on off-road vehicle usage on state lands, effective May 9, 2007;
 - allowing Winona County to build, own and operate a wind power electric generation facility, effective upon local compliance with certain statutes; and
 - a requirement that by January of each year, Xcel Energy must request from the Manitoba Hydro power company certain information regarding the socioeconomic status of any community that is a signatory to the Northern Flood Agreement, including South Indian Lake, in Canada.
- [HF2410/SF2096](#)*/CH57

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

More CAAPB members

A House and a Senate member would be added to the [Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board](#), under a bill passed by the House [132-0](#) May 8.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF203/SF118](#)* would increase to 12 the board's membership that already includes the lieutenant governor, four gubernatorial appointees, three St. Paul mayoral appointees and two legislators. The board is responsible for preserving the architectural integrity of a 60-block area including the Capitol.

Mariani said additional members would "add political muscle" to make the case for needed investments to preserve the deteriorating Capitol building. "This is an incredible building we have here ... and we are at a critical point in the existence of this structure."

A successful amendment, offered by [Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead), would require the House and Senate members be balanced in geographical representation between the Twin Cities metropolitan area and Greater Minnesota. "The Capitol belongs to all the people of Minnesota," he said.

According to its Web site, the board has four purposes:

- "(1) Preserve and enhance the dignity, beauty and architectural integrity of the capitol, the buildings immediately adjacent to it, the capitol grounds, and the capitol area;
- (2) Protect, enhance, and increase the open spaces within the capitol area when deemed necessary and desirable for the improvement of the public enjoyment thereof;
- (3) Develop proper approaches to the capitol area for pedestrian movement, the highway system, and mass transit system so that the

area achieves its maximum importance and accessibility; and

- (4) Establish a flexible framework for growth of the capitol buildings which will be in keeping with the spirit of the original design."

The bill now returns to the Senate.

— P. OSTBERG

Council sunset eliminated

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law eliminates the sunset date for the [Minnesota State Council on Disability](#).

Previously set to expire June 30, 2007, the change allows the council staff to work more productively without worrying about when the council might be eliminated due to the sunset date, said Ken Rogers, one of the 15 appointed council members.

According to its Web site, the agency "advises, provides technical assistance,

collaborates and advocates to expand opportunities, improve the quality of life and empower all persons with disabilities."

The law, signed May 3 by the governor, is sponsored by [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata) and [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick). It's effective May 4, 2007.

[HF1294/SF1483](#)*/CH33

— P. OSTBERG

DOER housekeeping changes

Signed
by
the
governor

Minor technical corrections to statutes relating to the [Department of Employee Relations](#) were signed into law May 3 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville) and [Sen. Geoff Michel](#) (R-Edina), the new law makes technical changes that include:

- removal of some references to the justification of nonaffirmative hires that the

STATEHOOD WEEK

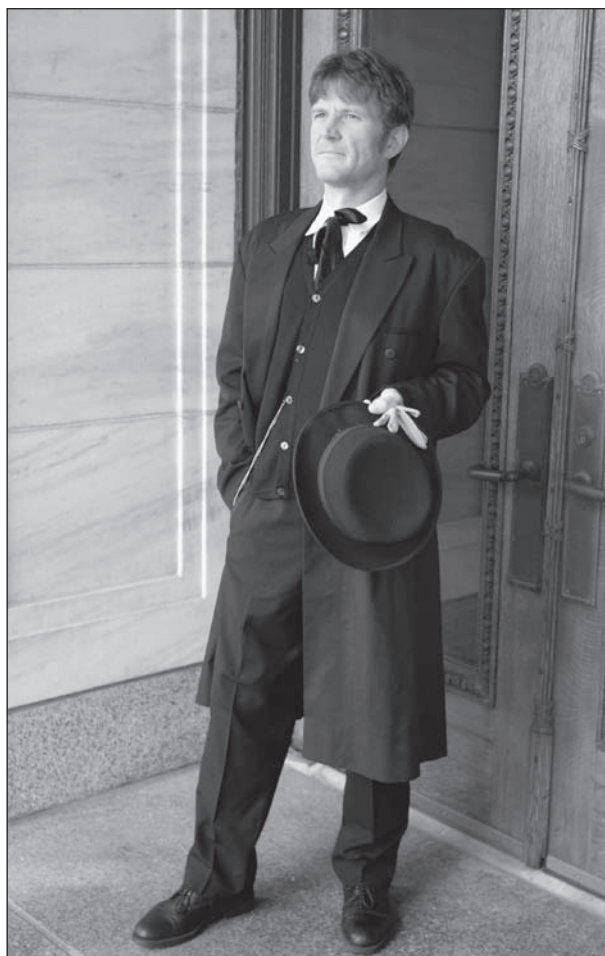


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

State Capitol site guide David Otto Simanek, in period costume, portrays an 1857 territorial senator on May 8. The portrayals are for visitors to the Capitol during Minnesota Statehood Week.

department says will correctly reflect the intent of the original language;

- clarification language related to the State Employee Group Insurance Plan concerning “proposals” and not “bids” when entering into new vendor contracts; and
- extending effective dates of voluntary unpaid leave of absence provisions from June 30, 2007, to June 30, 2009.

Nathan Morocco, manager of the State Employee Group Insurance Plan, said that bids require contracting with the lowest costing vendor and are not subject to negotiations. Proposals “allow the contract to be negotiated resulting in the selection of the most qualified vendor.”

The language relating to voluntary unpaid leave of absence is effective June 1, 2007. The remainder of the law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1267/SF1236](#)*/CH35

— P. OSTBERG

Nonprofit firefighter costs

Signed
by
the
governor

Nonprofit firefighter corporations will be added to the list of governmental units able to buy goods at set prices, under a new law signed May 4 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), the new law will add “independent nonprofit firefighter corporation” to the list of already designated groups that can obtain equipment through a state bidding process that allows for the best possible price for purchasing goods. Designated state groups include every city, county, town, school district and political subdivision, the University of Minnesota and nonprofit hospitals.

There are between 80 and 100 nonprofit fire corporations in the state, with the majority in the Arrowhead Region, said Nyle Zikmund, Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View fire chief. “We’re simply seeking that same latitude enjoyment of buying off those state contracts.”

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF465/SF321](#)*/CH43

— P. OSTBERG

Economic development bill vetoed

Vetoed
by
the
governor

A bill that supporters say would put the state on the path to a better future was rejected as a whole May 7 by [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#).

The \$448.8 million omnibus economic development finance bill ([SF2089](#)) was approved [84-44](#) by the House and [42-22](#) by the Senate May 4.

However, Pawlenty had numerous problems with the proposed legislation.

“Without an agreement on the overall state budget, I am not able to sign this bill as it spends \$56 million more than my recommended budget in this area, lacks fairness in distribution of economic development funding, contains policy items that will have a detrimental impact on business, and negatively impacts efficient administration of state programs,” he wrote in his [veto message](#).

Among the areas addressed in the bill were funding for the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), [Department of Labor and Industry](#), [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#), [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#) and the [Minnesota Historical Society](#).

“This bill is about youth, jobs, housing, arts, tourism, and it is about Minnesota,” [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) said during the Senate debate. He co-chaired the conference committee with [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown).

Proponents said the approximately \$41 million in new funding for housing issues was among the report’s positives.

The bill included an additional \$7.5 million for family homeless prevention; \$7.49 million for the Housing Trust Fund, which provides no interest deferred loans to help low-income people finance affordable permanent and supportive rental housing and limited equity cooperative housing; and an additional \$2 million in rental assistance to help families where at least one adult has a serious and persistent mental illness.

“If only for this section, this is a great bill to support,” said [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls).

The bill also would have:

- increased funding for youth programs by \$13.5 million;
- created a small business growth acceleration program to help qualified companies implement technology and business improvements;
- required every licensed health care facility in the state to adopt a safe patient handling program;
- established restricted journeyman and restricted master plumber licenses; and
- created a packinghouse workers bill of rights.

The latter, which included a requirement of providing minimum information on employee rights in the employee’s native language, was also frowned upon by the state’s top official.

“The meatpacker language is duplicative of current federal and state labor laws, and sends a negative signal to this industry that

is very important to Greater Minnesota and our agricultural economy,” Pawlenty wrote.

HFnone/[SF2089](#)*/CH55

— M. COOK

Meeting electronically

Meetings of some public bodies could be legally conducted by telephone or other electronic means during declared emergencies, under a bill passed May 9 by the House [130-2](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) and [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), [HF1303/SF1165](#)* would allow for these meetings without violating the state’s open meeting law, if certain conditions are met, including:

- the presiding officer, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer for the governing body determines the in-person meeting is not practical because of a health pandemic or declared emergency;
- all participating members, wherever their physical location, can hear one another, all discussion and testimony;
- people present at the regular meeting location can hear all discussion, testimony and all votes;
- at least one member of the body be physically present at the meeting location, unless it’s unfeasible due to a pandemic or emergency; and
- all votes are conducted by roll call, so each vote can be identified and recorded.

Gary Carlson, director of intergovernmental relations for the League of Minnesota Cities, told a House committee that many cities, counties and school districts have been preparing for a possible pandemic flu outbreak, and there is no clear authorization to conduct a meeting electronically.

Those in Greater Minnesota might not have the technology to access a public meeting being conducted with certain technologies, [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) said. “While I am hip to the technology age ... in outstate Minnesota one of the biggest concerns is access to technology,” he said.

Amended by the House, the bill returns to the Senate.

— P. OSTBERG

Sesquicentennial funding

Signed
by
the
governor

A commission organized to plan the state’s 150th birthday party next year is authorized to accept donations to help fund the celebration, under a new law signed May 2 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the law authorizes the Minnesota

Sesquicentennial Commission to directly accept gifts, grants and other donations and be directly appropriated to the commission to commemorate the sesquicentennial. It also permits the commission to enter into contracts and award grants. Currently received donations are being directed to the state's General Fund instead of the commission.

Under the new law, the commission is permitted to meet by telephone or other electronic means if certain conditions are met, such as all members being able to hear one another and the discussion when meeting.

The 17-member commission was created in 2005 by the Legislature to plan "celebratory activities and public engagement in every county in the state of Minnesota." According to the commission's Web site, the goals of the group include:

- achieving broad participation of Minnesotans, visitors, local communities, institutions and organizations in activities;
- raising awareness and educating Minnesotans by telling the stories of our past, recognizing the indigenous people and ethnic groups of the state and learning from them; and
- developing a shared vision by engaging Minnesotans in dialogue.

The law is effective May 4, 2007.

[HF2135/SF1949](#)*/CH29

— P. OSTBERG

State government finance bill vetoed

**Vetoed
by
the
governor**

The omnibus state government finance bill fell victim to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto pen May 7, just as he warned would happen if it contained certain controversial items.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), it addressed state agency funding needs for staffing, operations and some special projects at a cost of \$551.8 million in the 2008-09 biennium.

In his veto message, Pawlenty wrote that the basic structure of the bill was flawed by relying on unrealistic revenue projections from tax compliance initiatives, which the bill would use to increase spending. Opponents have said the Department of Revenue is not staffed to fulfill the initiatives, nor are the tax monies attainable.

Both the original House and Senate bills directed state employee collective bargaining agreements to offer health insurance to domestic partners if the same is offered to spouses of state employees. The reference was changed from "domestic partners" to "significant individual" in conference



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Sen. Don Betzold and Rep. Phyllis Kahn, co-chairs of the State Government Finance Conference Committee, listen to conferee proposals May 2. The committee's finished product was vetoed by the governor.

committee. A provision was added ordering the Department of Employee Relations to conduct a study on the costs associated with offering these health benefits.

The governor addressed this provision in his veto message. "Again, I am opposed to any legislation concerning domestic partner benefits, including the bill's study and definition of 'significant individual.'"

Elections provisions that would have allowed for easing voter registration procedures were a significant concern for Pawlenty. He said the changes were unnecessary and would undermine the overall integrity of the state's voter registration and election system.

He also opposed the two new commissions called for in the bill — the Minnesota Commission of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. Pawlenty said they would duplicate activities already being addressed in state government.

Other contentious issues the governor noted included: funding increases for the Legislature, elimination of appointed employees in the governor's office and not enough funding for technology infrastructure projects, including Internet security.

[HF953/SF1997](#)*/CH56.

— P. OSTBERG

Workers compensation changes

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The [Department of Labor and Industry](#) will provide certain groups information regarding federal exclusions for state workers' compensation, under a new law signed May 4 by Gov.

Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin) and [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), the new law will require the commissioner to provide information to medical care providers, employers, employees, insurers and organizations regarding federal exclusions for state workers' compensation coverage.

Under the new law, the commissioner is to submit a report by March 1, 2008 to the Legislature detailing the department's shared information.

Poppe said the change will help those working in the health care field and others to better understand the federal exclusions.

The law is effective May 5, 2007.

[HF1865/SF1787](#)*/CH39

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Medical marijuana on the floor

Medical marijuana legislation overcame a final committee hurdle May 7, with approval by the House Ways and Means Committee. It now goes to the House floor.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), [HF655/SF345](#)*, was passed 35-29 by the Senate May 3.

The bill would allow medical use of marijuana for patients suffering cancer, intractable pain and other debilitating diseases, so long as it's recommended by a physician.

"I think this is the compassionate thing to do," Huntley said.

Approved users would register with the

state, and could obtain 2.5 ounces of the drug from registered organizations, which may grow up to 12 plants for each patient.

[Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) questioned the staff levels recommended by the [Department of Health](#) to implement the legislation should it pass.

"I'm very upset to see a fiscal note of 10 people, and it's going to be addressed in one way or another before we pass this," he said.

— M. SIMPSON

Reviving mortuary practices

A bill updating language for mortuary practices enjoyed easy passage on the House floor, with a 130-1 vote May 4.

According to its sponsor, [Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester), [HF1072/SF802](#)* would remove expired and outdated language, add several new requirements, clarify information and establish several consumer protections.

"There's broad agreement on this bill," she said.

Some noteworthy provisions include:

- recognition of cultural beliefs in burial practices;
- lawful permission for non-mortuary professionals to conduct funeral services;
- signed consent by a designated individual before an embalment, except in certain cases; and
- signed and dated affirmation of pre-made funeral arrangements.

Originally passed 61-0 by the Senate April 30, [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), the Senate sponsor, did not agree with the amended version returned from the House. A conference committee is expected to work out the difference.

— M. SIMPSON

Reportable events list expanded

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law expands the list of reportable events under the [Health Care Events Reporting Act of 2003](#).

Under the new law, health care facilities must also report to the commissioner of health events of artificial insemination with the wrong donor sperm or egg.

Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) and [Sen. David Hann](#) (R-Eden Prairie), the law was signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 4 and takes effect Oct. 7, 2007.

Reportable events related to falls are also expanded to include not only those resulting in death, but those resulting in a serious disability. The provision relating to a death or serious disability in connection with a patient's disappearance is also addressed. The law will be changed from a disappearance of

more than four hours to any length of time.
[HF1990/SF1790](#)*/CH41

— L. SCHUTZ

Help for sexual assault victims

Signed
by
the
governor

The Compassionate Care for Sexual Assault Victims Act was signed into law May 4 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law sets a statewide standard of care for sexual assault victims.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law requires hospitals to give unbiased information about emergency contraceptives and prophylactic antibiotics, which help prevent infection of sexually transmitted diseases. It also mandates that such drugs be provided should they be safe for, and requested by, the patient.

The law also states that emergency care for sexual assault victims be provided for both male and female patients.

Supporters said that only 40 percent of emergency rooms in Minnesota provide emergency contraception on a consistent basis.

Slawik noted that in Greater Minnesota, where there is typically only one hospital, a patient may have nowhere to go if the hospital doesn't offer emergency contraception.

[HF1442/SF1266](#)*/CH42

— S. HARDING

Smoking ban agreement

Only a last vote from the Legislature and the governor's pen separates Minnesota from a statewide smoking ban.

As agreed upon by a conference committee, [HF305/SF238](#)* would prohibit smoking in public places, including bars, restaurants and public transit. Violators would be guilty of a petty misdemeanor. [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato) are the sponsors.

The original House and Senate proposals included several exemptions, including disabled veteran camps and locally approved smoking rooms in bars and restaurants.

Only the exemption for heavy commercial vehicles survived.

Senate language that would have regulated smoking in patios was also removed.

Still included is a study to investigate how a statewide ban would affect lawful gambling and House language that would allow bar and restaurant workers to utilize the Dislocated Worker Program, which provides job services and counseling, should they become unemployed within two years, should the act be implemented.

Conferees also agreed to call the bill the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007. If signed into law, the effective date would be Aug. 1, 2007.

— M. SIMPSON

INSURANCE

Expanding hearing aid coverage

Signed
by
the
governor

Insurance companies will be forced to cover hearing aids for all childhood conditions, under a new law signed May 10 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the measure expands the mandate in current law, which requires that health plans cover the devices only if a child suffers from functional congenital malformation of the ear. It takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

Although the law was approved [132-0](#) by the House May 7 and 62-0 by the Senate March 14, some members worried that the law equates to another insurance mandate.

"The stacking effect of (these mandates) drives up cost for people privately insured," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague). "It pushes out people who are less able to afford insurance."

"This is not a new mandate," Sertich replied. "This is already in law; this just expands it."

The law would not affect the self-insured market — those employers that assume the major cost of health insurance for their employees — which is exempt from state law and taxes.

[HF633/SF805](#)*/CH60

— M. SIMPSON

Mandatory school insurance pool

It was a long trek to approval in the House Finance Committee for a bill that would establish a mandatory statewide insurance pool for school employees.

After 21 amendments and several motions to re-refer the bill, it was approved May 9 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF464/SF276](#)* would establish a 14-member board charged with designing a health insurance pool for all school employees. It was approved 42-23 by the Senate March 28.

"The system is broke, and it needs fixing," Sertich said. "And thus far we have not seen anything better. I believe this is a good step to providing coverage, especially for schools who do not carry health insurance."

Though no details would be determined until the program is established, the board would be required to offer six plans and establish reserves and other means to achieve long-term stability. The state would not be liable for any insolvency.

Efforts aimed at changing the bill targeted the mandatory nature of the pool. Members unsuccessfully attempted to incorporate language that would have offered an opt-out to districts in various forms.

An amendment offered by [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) would have granted school districts voluntary participation after three years.

"It's a way to find some middle ground," Westrom said. "Why would we not want to grant our schools some local control?"

[Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) sponsored an amendment that would have forced the board to seek approval from the [Department of Commerce](#) for all design elements of the health plans.

"They need sufficient oversight," Kohls said.

[Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) argued the extra measure was unnecessary.

"The pool gets to decide what plan they choose, but the Department of Commerce must license anyone who sells insurance in the state," he said.

— M. SIMPSON

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Conflicts of interest clarified

Signed
by
the
governor

The Hennepin Healthcare System Inc. Board of Directors is a mix of public officials and others.

A new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 3, clarifies that any conflicts of interest involving members who do not hold office are governed by laws governing nonprofit corporations. Conflicts involving members who hold public office, such as county commissioners, are regulated by the laws governing public officers.

Established in 2005, the system is responsible for the operations and management of the Hennepin County Medical Center.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), the law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1872/SF1807*/CH34](#)

— C. GREEN

Library merger moves closer

The Hennepin County Library system and the Minneapolis Public Library serve two definable functions, according to Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin County commissioner. The first supplies its readers with current and popular content, while the latter is good for research and accessing archived documents.

The two systems could soon become one. Sponsored by [Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), [HF1973](#) would allow the two library systems to merge. Approved by the House Finance Committee May 8, the bill's next stop is the House Taxes Committee.

The bill calls for the Minneapolis system to transfer all property and assets — including buildings, library collections, artwork, equipment, and the Minneapolis Central Library parking ramp — to Hennepin County. The city of Minneapolis would remain responsible for any city-issued bonds for capital improvements for the Minneapolis Library system, and would contribute operating funds to Hennepin County for the next 10 years.

Benefits and seniority of all transferred employees would be protected, while Minneapolis employees would be permitted to continue participating in their current retirement funds.

Carlson said the merger would increase efficiencies and allow for the reopening of three Minneapolis branches that were closed due to financial constraints.

A Senate companion, [SF1812](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Home), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Land Planning Act stays intact

Vetoed
by
the
governor

A bill that would have eliminated outdated and erroneous references in the 30-year-old Metropolitan Land Planning Act was [vetoed](#) May 3 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsors of the bill, [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), called it a housekeeping bill with no substantial policy changes. There was, however, a policy change that the governor did not agree with: the elimination of the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government.

The commission was established to oversee the Metropolitan Council's operating and capital budget and improvement program and its work program.

"The Commission provides a necessary bipartisan means for the Legislature to

work with the Metropolitan Council and local governments on regional planning," Pawlenty wrote in his veto message. Because the commission is not burdened with the daily operations of the council, the commission could provide oversight to ensure balance between regional and local needs, he said.

[HF881*/SF981/CH31](#)

— C. GREEN

TAXES

Interstate interchange request

The Tax Conference Committee continues to trudge through its work, having made it just more than halfway through a side-by-side comparison of the House and Senate bills after six meetings.

On May 8, the committee heard testimony on a House section of the bill, [HF2362](#), which would create a tax increment financing district for a Brockton interchange on a section of Interstate 94 in Dayton.

The provision came from a bill sponsored by [Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers). She said the project developer would front the money and would not expect repayment from the [Department of Transportation](#) if the eight-year district did not pay back the full cost.

The interchange has not been included in MnDOT's 20-year funding plan, said Chris Roy, MnDOT transportation planning director. A study would have to be done as well as traffic modeling, he said.

"It sounds like we're having a private developer take over MnDOT's job," said [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul). "It seems rather unusual to me unless it happens all the time and we just don't know about it."

[Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook) asked what would happen if the Legislature granted the TIF district.

"It would be a fairly lengthy process," Roy said. Adding that on a fast track, the interchange could be under construction within two years.

"I'm convinced this interchange is a good idea," Bakk said. "But if there's no plan to do anything, what's the plan?"

Roy said the interchange might reduce traffic congestion, but crash rates are generally higher in interchange areas with people merging onto the highway.

[Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington) said the House is open to funding transportation, but the testimony did not convince her.

She added that it seemed the developer would get a break with the TIF district, not the city.

"There's no plan in place from the developer

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

or MnDOT,” Lenczewski said. “Why would a developer just front the money? That land price will go through the roof (with an interchange there).”

If included in the conference committee report, the TIF district would:

- allow increments from the district to be used only to finance the interchange project, including land acquisition, public infrastructure and administrative costs;
- not require the city to find that the district is necessary to create new jobs or preserve the tax base of the state, only that the primary purpose of the district is to finance the construction of public infrastructure;
- not limit the use of increments to assist manufacturing, warehousing or research and development projects;
- not put a limit on the percentage of the district that may be owned by the city;
- allow parcels of land in the green acres and agricultural preserves programs to be included in the district;
- not allow administrative expenses to exceed 10 percent of the improvement costs; and
- limit increments to 80 percent of the amount permitted under general law.

— S. HEGMAN

Public finance omnibus

A bill that would affect city and county local governments could soon be heard on the House floor after being approved by the House Taxes and Ways and Means committees May 8-9.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), [HF2268](#) is the annual bill sponsored by the Minnesota Institute of Public Finance. It would authorize the issuance of debt for town and county subordinate service districts, and would make permanent the authority to issue capital notes for computer software.

It would make a number of changes in the laws governing the powers of local governments to incur debt for projects and to invest public funds by:

- authorizing the issuance of debt for town and county subordinate service districts;
- authorizing the Metropolitan Council to issue \$33.6 million of debt for transit improvements;
- authorizing cities, counties and school districts to establish trusts for the payment of post-employment health benefits required to be recognized by the accounting standards;
- authorizing the issuance of debt in anticipation of the receipt of federal grants for transportation projects, known as Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles;
- expanding the area of operation of the Hen-

nepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority to include the entire county;

- making the authority to issue capital notes for computer software permanent; and
- providing special law authority to Crane Lake and Winsted to issue debt for projects.

Much of the discussion surrounded [HF2464](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent), which would modify a county’s bonding authority by expanding the amount of debt it can have under the county capital improvement plan bonding law.

Houston County wants to replace its 132-year-old jail, the state’s oldest, with a new criminal justice center, but there has been much opposition because the proposed building site is in the middle of Caledonia, across from a school and next to several homes.

A petition to get a reverse referendum attracted 1,200 signatures, although only 600 were needed. Instead, the county decided not to choose a plan that would require a referendum or a reverse referendum by going through a leasing program that would not require either one, Tschumper said.

“I want to give the people of my county the chance to vote on this,” he said.

Other provisions in the omnibus bill include:

- removing the restriction that not more than two questions can be submitted to voters at a special election conducted through the mail;
- changing the required time period for publication of a public notice in a newspaper from 14 days to 30 days; and
- eliminating the expiration date for cities to issue capital notes for certain equipment or software.

A companion bill, [SF1933](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), was included in the Senate Omnibus Tax Bill, now in a conference committee.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Airport funding task force

With ground transportation funding decisions awaiting House and Senate votes, a group looking at costs associated with soaring above the clouds could be created.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), [HF1940](#) would establish a task force to look at a variety of airport issues, including funding, the use of sales tax as potential revenue for airports, registration tax on airplanes and airport infrastructure. A report would be due the Legislature by Feb. 15, 2008.

“It would be anticipated from that report there might be legislation that would be changing the formulas and the way things work in terms of aviation funding,” Dill said.

Approved May 8 by the House Finance Committee, the bill is headed to the House Taxes Committee.

Dill said there are 134 general aviation airports outside the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

He hopes the task force takes “a serious look” at the taxes placed on private airplanes and other state taxes that may force businesses to register their planes in lower taxed states.

Dill also noted that the tax on airline fuel has increased 1 cent since it was first implemented in 1945.

The bill would appropriate \$200,000 from the state airports fund for the study, with unused dollars to be returned to the fund.

The bill was successfully amended by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) to permit state money to be used at the city’s former airport to instead be used at the city’s new airport during the next five years. He said the city and the Department of Transportation have agreed to this change.

A companion bill, [SF1753](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), was approved 60-3 May 9. The provision is also in the Senate omnibus transportation finance bill ([SF1986](#)), and the Senate transportation policy bill ([SF1971](#)).

— M. COOK

Where to find information

House Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

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Franny, left, and Patrick, right, joined their mother, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, at her chamber desk as the House meets in session.

The parent legislator

Balancing the frenzied work of the House with that of spouse, partner and parent

By MIA SIMPSON

It's the same reality for legislators every year as the session's conclusion draws near: early mornings and late nights filled with lengthy discussion on the House floor.

It's the frenzied work life of a legislator. And as members try to balance work and family, the struggle often shows up in their offices, at hearings and on the House floor.

There are hints of the importance of family everywhere — such as the spread of crumbs on [Rep. Paul Thissen's](#) (DFL-Mpls) office file cabinet, a result of a visit from one of his three young children; the framed family photos, like those in [Rep. Steve Sviggum's](#) (R-Kenyon) office; and of course, the visits that loved ones make.

[Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) brought his son Jude, the fifth of his six children, for an extended stay at the Capitol when the child was homeschooled during fourth grade.

After six terms, Abeler is familiar with the

challenges of balancing his work and family roles. "It's lousy. But I'm lucky because I get to go home every night."

That's a luxury some legislators don't have. [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) lives about 170 miles from St. Paul, so he rents an apartment in the city during session. He said his wife and 15-month-old twin daughters come down as often as they can. "We have four of everything," he said.

When they aren't here, Westrom said he'll call home two or three times a day, but he knows that he still loses some moments.

"They just started walking," he said. "I missed their first steps."

[Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) laments what she isn't privy to at home. With four children, the youngest in high school, Norton said work at the Legislature has rendered her clueless about some details in her teenage daughter's life.

"I've been devoted to education my entire life, and now I don't know who her teachers are and I can't go to conferences," said Norton, who goes home on weekends. "But I know my husband's there, so it helps."

[Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) also has high school children: 15-year-old twins. She utilizes technology to stay in touch, including cell phones, text messages and e-mail.

"Because our time together is limited, we are learning to conduct our relationship with new tools," she said. "But I do get to see them everyday."

Despite the sacrifice, [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) said her five terms at the Legislature have helped instill in her children an understanding and appreciation for government and history.

"My dream for my daughter is to be the next Rep. Slawik," she said. 🗽

***"Because our time together
is limited, we are learning
to conduct our relationship
with new tools."***

— Rep. Erin Murphy



Rep. Nora Slawik poses with her son, Sean.



House Minority Leader Marty Seifert and his daughter, Brittany, make their way back to his chamber desk.



Rep. Brad Finstad shares a moment with his daughter, Gretta.



Rep. Chris DeLaForest is joined on the House floor by his wife, Karen, and son, Will.

PHOTOS BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Hunting, fishing, parks and more

Game and fish bill expanded to include an even broader array of subjects

By Nick Busse

Cock pheasant bag limits, smokeless gunpowder, night vision goggles and crossbow hunting — those were just a few of the diverse topics covered in the omnibus game and fish bill as it made its way through various House committees.

The version passed by the House May 7 includes even more.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) and [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), [HF1021/SF1131](#)* originally dealt with fishing requirements on Lake Superior; as amended on the House floor, it now incorporates the language of the omnibus game and fish bill, a state lands acquisitions bill and several others.

The bill would now make an array of changes to the state's hunting and fishing laws, add lands to certain state parks and permit the sale or transfer of certain state lands. Passed 118-13, it now heads back to the Senate, where it passed 65-0 April 16.

Dill said the bill represented a "litany" of bills heard by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division, which he chairs. He estimated that approximately 24 bills had been incorporated into the language, adding that the bill was "relatively split" between Democrat- and Republican-sponsored provisions.

Some Republicans objected to the procedure being used to move the bill forward, arguing that replacing the language of a very small bill with that of an omnibus bill was against House rules. A motion by [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) would have prevented the adoption of the bill's new language, but it was rejected on an 81-51 vote.

Hunting and fishing

Some provisions incorporated from the original game and fish bill into the new bill include:

- increasing the pheasant hunting bag limit to three cock pheasants per day after Dec. 1 during the pheasant season;
- creating an apprentice hunter validation that would allow individuals at least 12 years old who do not possess a firearms safety certificate to hunt small game and deer, for a period of one year in their lifetime, if accompanied by an adult with a valid hunting license;
- directing the DNR to develop a program to encourage private landowners to make their land available for public hunting and fishing use;
- eliminating the reciprocal nonresident deer archery license fee and lowering non-resident deer hunting fees for individuals between 12 and 18 years of age;
- setting new restrictions on baiting deer;
- lowering the minimum draw weight for bows used for hunting;
- eliminating a ban on transporting raccoon, beaver and rabbit meat out of state; and
- exempting military personnel and veterans from a portion of the state's firearm safety certification requirements.

Game & Fish continued on page 21



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

A provision of the omnibus game and fish bill would allow state and local agencies to recover any costs incurred while removing ice houses that are on the ice after deadline.

Bill gets failing grade

'Underwhelming' higher education package unacceptable to governor

BY MIKE COOK

Collegians currently cramming for final exams can hope for better results than a bill that could have helped those students coming back for future terms.

Approved [86-46](#) by the House and [44-21](#) by the Senate May 8, the conference committee report on [SF1989](#) received a gubernatorial stamp of disapproval one day later.

"I think we have a really good bill," said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), who co-chaired the conference committee with [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul). "I think the days of double-digit tuition increases in the state are over. I wish we could have spent more to help students, but we're limited with what we had."

The \$3.16 billion package would have provided nearly \$361.5 million in new spending, including \$135.4 million for the [Minnesota State Colleges and Universities](#) system and nearly \$134.5 million for the [University of Minnesota](#). It also included new money for the state grant program and \$10 million in new funding for the Minnesota GI Bill, with much of it directed to help returning veterans. The bill was \$39.6 million below the governor's recommendation.

"It's underwhelming, uninspiring, spends too much in fiscal years 2010-11, and it ignores our requests for reforms," Gov. Tim Pawlenty said at a May 8 press conference.

Pappas said the bill is another effort at getting higher education funding back to where it was before it took a 15 percent cut in 2003. "It is a 13 percent increase, but we are still 6 percent below where we should have been if we had only been doing inflation."

Because the bill was \$96 million more than the governor's target for the next biennium, many House Republicans voted no, although some, including [Rep. Carol McFarlane](#) (R-White Bear Lake), liked some of what was in the proposal.

Student costs

"This bill is all about students. It's about sustained support for students over time, not a one-year tuition freeze gimmick," said [Rep. Kathy Brynaert](#) (DFL-Mankato).

For example, an additional \$58 million would have been infused into the state grant program, including an increase in child care grants.

Both bodies had sought tuition caps at one point, but it was not included in the final bill.

"We felt it was irresponsible to be too restrictive. The MnSCU board has committed to not increase tuition above 4 percent, but we think with our additional resources for technology they should be able to hold that down to 3 percent," Pappas said.

The bill included money to establish banded tuition at the university's Crookston, Duluth and Morris campuses that would have allowed students to pay for only 13 credits, even if they took more. When combined with other funding, it would have resulted in minimal tuition increases at Crookston and Duluth. A Minnesota student from a family with an income under \$150,000 could have seen a 10 percent decrease at Morris.

Many students spoke before a House committee this year about rising textbook costs.

The bill would have forced publishers, beginning in 2009, to disclose changes between current and previous editions of a text book. It would have also allocated \$500,000 in one-time money to "identify

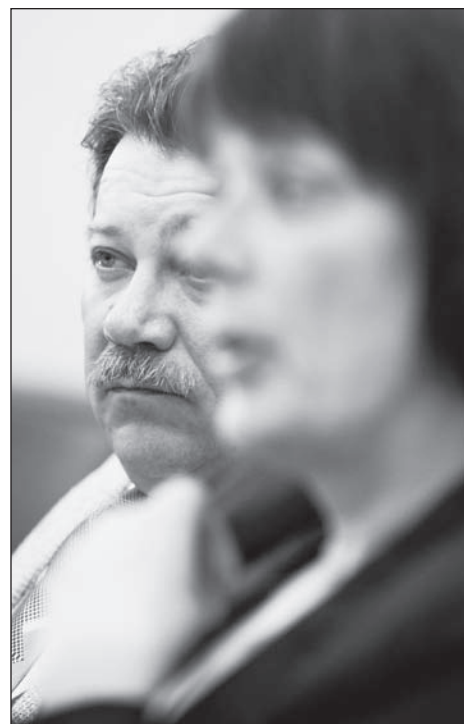


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina and Sen. Sandy Pappas, co-chairs of the Higher Education Finance Conference Committee, listen to testimony during an April 25 meeting. The committee's finished product was vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 9.

and improve on practices for selecting and purchasing textbooks and course materials that are used by students."

A provision allowing children of illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition — the so-called "Dream Act" — was reluctantly absent because conferees knew the governor opposed the idea.

Instead, the bill would have required six more MnSCU schools to offer a flat tuition rate, as already occurs at 13 of its campuses.

Failing to ACHIEVE

In June 2006, Pawlenty offered an achievement-based scholarship program that

Higher Ed. continued on page 21

An ill bill?

Omnibus health and human services finance bill vetoed

By MIA SIMPSON

It's back to the drawing board for health and human services committee conferees.

The hundreds of work hours spent reconciling House and Senate differences over the omnibus health and human services finance bill were thwarted less than 24 hours after the legislation hit Gov. Tim Pawlenty's desk.

The governor vetoed the bill, which included funding for health care, nursing homes and low-income programs, May 8, after it was passed by the House [82-44](#) and Senate [47-19](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), the package would have provided

health care coverage for tens of thousands of Minnesotans, increased nursing home funding by \$130 million, adjusted work requirements and repealed penalties for families on welfare and established dozens of housing, mental health and public health initiatives in the next biennium.

"This bill takes a giant step forward for

health care and other programs," Berglin said at a May 7 press conference. "It reflects an honest budget that is affordable and well within the means we had."

Republicans and the governor criticized the bill's nearly \$10 billion price tag, an increase of \$355 million in General Fund spending for fiscal years 2008-09.

"It's very, very obvious what is driving your need for more taxes," [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) said on the House floor May 7. "It's this bill."

Of special concern to some members were the tails — spending required after 2009 — for some proposals, which they claimed equated to a 40 percent increase from this year.

"It's not doable," Sviggum said.

Health continued on page 22



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Thomas Huntley and Sen. Linda Berglin discuss provisions in the omnibus health and human services finance bill May 1. Conferees agreed to a plan, but the governor quickly gave it a veto.

Public safety bill signed into law

Multi-billion in funding survives possible veto

By CRAIG GREEN

Of all the omnibus appropriations bills sent to the governor this session, the public safety finance bill is the only one so far to become law without any type of veto.

But through the process, there was by no means a guarantee that the bill would make it into law.

[Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) made it clear that if the omnibus bill contained a controversial insurance provision, it would be vetoed.

Originally the provision was included in both the House and Senate versions of the bill, but after a meeting of members of the House, Senate and governor's office, it was agreed that it would be pulled. Repassed by both bodies, the governor ultimately signed the bill into law May 7.

New budgets

The new law, sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), will provide more than \$2 billion for fiscal years 2008-09, up from \$1.85 billion in the current biennium. Funding is provided for the court system, Department of Corrections, Office of Justice Programs, Board of Public Defense, Sentencing Guidelines Commission and the Department of Human Rights. Most of the law takes effect July 1, 2007.

The Department of Corrections will receive \$936.7 million; \$614.32 million will go to the court system; and the Board of Public Defense will receive \$135.8 million, with enough funds for 34 additional full-time attorneys.

The Department of Public Safety will have \$304.8 million, including resources dedicated to hiring 15 or 16 forensics scientists for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

The Department of Corrections budget includes additional funding for health costs, utility fees, probation caseload reduction and reimbursement for housing short-term offenders.

Policy changes include an increase in penalties for theft of copper wiring, stronger protections for victims of sexual assault and stronger penalties for violating a domestic abuse no contact order. Victims of domestic violence who fear future abuse if they remain at their residence are now allowed to terminate a lease.

Bill in trouble

When Paymar began to address the House about the conference committee report on May 3, before its passage, it appeared as though most of the bugs had been worked out. Paymar spoke of some of the specific areas that would receive funding, as well as some of the policy provisions that were not included.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) then unsuccessfully made a motion to return the report back to the conference committee. Seifert said the bill had a lot of good things in it, but it was also missing some important elements other members wanted to see included.

Among the provisions was Emily's Law, which would reduce the age a juvenile could be charged as an adult from 14 to 13; a provision that would relax the requirements of serving

a restraining order and stronger penalties for repeat sex offenders.

Seifert also read a letter from Pawlenty that warned if the bill included the "good faith" section relating to insurance, he would send it back.

First introduced in [HF1251](#), and sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), the provision would require insurers to act in good faith in responding to liability claims and would permit recovery of damages by anyone harmed by the failure to act in good faith.

"The debate regarding this provision primarily features a dispute between the trial lawyers and the insurance industry. A compromise has not been reached and the provision in this bill is unacceptable," Pawlenty said. "Moreover, such a provision does not belong in a public safety bill. ... Progress toward enhanced public safety in Minnesota should not be delayed or diluted because of a turf battle between trial lawyers and the insurance industry."

[Rep. Steve Smith](#) (R-Mound), who was part of the conference committee and signed the report endorsing the bill, spoke in opposition to the bill as well.

In addition to his concern over House provisions that were removed from the bill, he said, "The first task of any government is to provide justice and public safety for its citizens, and not to delay that duty because of a turf battle involving the insurance companies and their desire to continue doing things their own way."

[HF829*](#)/[SF650](#)/CH54 

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

House Public Information Services

175 State Office Building296-2146

Committee Schedule Hotline

175 State Office Building296-9283

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol296-2314

House Index

211 Capitol296-6646

Senate Information

231 Capitol296-0504

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol296-2344

Voice mail/order bills.....296-2343

Senate Index

110 Capitol296-2887

Committee Hotline, Senate296-8088

Speeding to a dead end?

Omnibus transportation finance package includes gas tax increase

By Mike Cook

An omnibus transportation finance bill, that tries to address needs and speed, may have about as much chance of avoiding a gubernatorial veto as Wile E. Coyote does of catching the Road Runner.

However, supporters remain confident it still could become law.

Members of the conference committee, who gave their blessing May 9, said the state's current system is inadequate, and fails to meet the needs of many Minnesotans. They want to see a faster, sleeker system that allows people to quickly and safely move from Point A to Point B.

However, their proposal ([HF946](#)) must first get past the state's largest roadblock — the veto pen of Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Supporters said the approximately \$4.2 billion package is not all they had hoped for, but [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), who co-chaired the committee with [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), said it's a bill to move the state forward.

The product includes a 5-cent increase in the state's gas tax, permission for counties to increase their sales tax by 0.5 percent for transportation needs, a formula for dedicating motor vehicle sales tax revenue, and it would authorize \$1.5 billion in trunk highway bonding in the next decade.

"We've been dying on the vine for transportation funding for a long, long time," Murphy said. "It's been 1988 since there was an increase in the gas tax. It's been several years since there's been any new money put into transportation. We're looking to invest now, at the beginning, a little over \$600 million a year, and after everything's phased in we're going to be in the \$725 million to \$735 million range per year."

The plan is expected to be on the House and Senate floors early next week.

Conferees often used the word "compromise" while negotiating a final agreement that they hope will receive serious consideration by the

governor.

"This bill does as much as we could do for highways and transit considering the budget we dealt with and the targets we had," Lieder said.

Both bodies entered the conference committee proposing a 10-cent gas tax; but in hopes of bill passage, members halved the amount. It would take effect Sept. 1, 2007.

"This will get us \$160 million a year. A 10-cent increase will get us \$320 million, and that still won't meet all our needs," said [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). She noted that one year's revenue is not enough to pay for one large project, such as the Crosstown Commons reconstruction in South Minneapolis or the reconstruction of the Highway 169 "Devil's Triangle" in Brooklyn Park and Osseo.

In addition to the gas tax, the bill provides for metropolitan and Greater Minnesota transportation sales taxes.

Any of the seven counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area could form a joint powers board that could impose a 0.5 percent sales tax for transportation and a \$20 excise tax on motor vehicles. Revenue would be divided so that at least 50 percent is for transit, at least 25 percent is for roads and highways, and the rest is flexible, with up to 5 percent permissible for bicycle and pedestrian programs. A county adjacent to a county in the joint powers board could also join.

In Greater Minnesota, a county or a joint powers board could impose the excise and sales taxes. Unlike that in the metropolitan area, it would be subject to voter approval, must be for a specific project and would

terminate upon the project's completion.

Supporters are unfazed by the lack of support that a tax increase has with many Minnesotans, including Pawlenty, who has threatened to veto any bill that raises taxes.

Nonetheless, Murphy believes he has enough Senate votes to override a veto, while Lieder is confident that once Republican House members see the bill there will be enough green votes.

"It may be easier to convince more House members at the nickel," said [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina). "There's been a number of them over the course of several years who have indicated that maybe 5 cents would be to their liking and they could support that."

Last November, voters approved a constitutional amendment so that all motor vehicle sales tax revenue will be used for transportation purposes. The bill sets forth the allocations so that once it is fully phased in starting in fiscal year 2012, 60 percent will go to highways, 36 percent to metropolitan area transit and 4 percent to Greater Minnesota transit.

The bill also calls for the dedication of sales tax on motor vehicle leases for transportation purposes, as was proposed by Pawlenty. That money now goes to the General Fund. The agreement calls for 50 percent of the money to go to highways, 37.5 percent to metropolitan area transit and 12.5 percent to Greater Minnesota transit when the funding is fully implemented in fiscal year 2012.

Conferees reluctantly got closer to Pawlenty's \$1.7 billion bonding request for highway construction projects over a 10-year period beginning in fiscal year 2008, which he said would accelerate many construction projects. Debt service on his proposal is estimated to cost \$14.14 million in the biennium.

The agreement calls for \$1.5 billion — an equal division of the original House and Senate proposals — and specifies five projects to be funded, including \$50 million for transit facilities on trunk highways, \$40 million for

Transportation continued on page 22

Friday, May 4

HF2464-Tschumper (DFL)

Taxes

County capital improvement projects debt limit increased, and bonding referendum required.

HF2465-Doty (DFL)

Finance

Trunk Highway 25 in Pierz reconstruction funding provided.

HF2466-Doty (DFL)

Finance

Buckman tornado siren grant provided.

Monday, May 7

HF2467-Thissen (DFL)

Taxes

Metropolitan Airports Commission non-debt levy authority eliminated and new bonding by the commission prohibited.

HF2468-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

University of Minnesota; Delaware building renovation funding provided for use as a biomedical science research facility.

Wednesday, May 9

HF2469-Hornstein (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Dog and Cat Breeders Act adopted providing standards of care for dog and cat breeders.

HF2470-Kahn (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Criminal felony complaints authorized to proceed against unnamed defendants when DNA evidence exists.

HF2471-McFarlane (R)

Commerce & Labor

Charitable organizations financial statement requirements modified.

HF2472-Loeffler (DFL)

Finance

Capitol complex renovation design funding provided.

HF2473-Kahn (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Statewide and major local retirement plans updated and omitted salary deduction provisions clarified.

HF2474-Jaros (DFL)

Finance

Lake Superior Mississippi Railroad scenic railway improvements funding provided.

HF2475-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

School district capital facilities bond repayment time period extended.

Game & Fish continued from page 16

Lands and miscellaneous

The land acquisitions section of the bill contains provisions that add new lands to Flandrau State Park in Brown County and Whitewater State Park in Winona County. Other lands provisions include:


- deleting lands from Flandrau State Park;
- permitting the public or private sale or conveyance of various state lands in several counties; and
- allowing the Itasca County auditor to lease certain land to Minnesota Steel Industries for 20 years, for use as a tailings basin and buffer area.

The bill also contains a provision that would ban the sale of household dishwasher detergents containing more than 0.5 percent phosphorous by July 1, 2010. This comes from [HF1382/SF1109](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids).

[Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) successfully amended the bill with a provision that would boost Leech Lake's priority ranking for the DNR's walleye stocking program. Dill said the measure would likely come under scrutiny by a conference committee.

[Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by repealing

new restrictions on off-road vehicle trails on state lands enacted by the omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill, which was signed into law May 8 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Also included in the bill is the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act ([HF1063/SF1051*](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), and an extension of noise standards exemptions for racetracks, which comes from [HF415/SF311](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin). 

Higher Ed. continued from page 17

would have allowed students to earn scholarship money and college credits while in high school. Dubbed ACHIEVE, the plan came with a price tag estimated at \$112 million. The governor's budget recommendation was \$78.9 million.

Instead, the bill included \$4 million in a reformatted program called Achieve Success and Persistence through Innovative Rigorous Education. It would have appropriated \$1 million to both MnSCU and the university to provide courses to students in remote and underserved areas where districts lack resources to provide rigorous courses. The remaining \$2 million was to increase Intervention for College Attendance Program grants that, according to [statute](#), "foster postsecondary attendance by providing

outreach services to historically underserved students in grades six through 12."


"It is doubtful that the 'alternative' proposal included in this bill would have any significant impact on the state's future workforce and global competitiveness," Pawlenty wrote in his veto message.

During the House debate, [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) said if the governor vetoes the bill because of this program's lack of funding, he wonders where the money was to come from.

"If we have to cut millions of dollars is it going to result in tuition increases? Is it going to result in us taking away dollars from child care grants? Is it going to result in us taking money from the University of Minnesota/Mayo genomics partnership? These are all critical investments that will move Minnesota forward."

Other components

- each MnSCU institution was to provide information on personal financial management to students, and the university was requested to do the same;
- no state money could have been used for costs related to the early termination of an athletic coach;
- selection of the university's Board of Regents and MnSCU Board of Trustees would have been altered; and
- a small surcharge assessed on non-residential construction projects would have gone towards helping fund construction management programs in public postsecondary schools to meet the state's demand for workers.

[HF797/SF1989*/CH65](#) 

Health continued from page 18

Several of the most costly items in the bill were removed during the conference committee process, including the Cover all Kids provision which would have provided health care to all children statewide.

Committee members instead adopted many Senate initiatives in [SF2](#), sponsored by Berglin, which would:

- establish an outreach program for Minnesota health care programs that would include public awareness campaigns, grant support for nonprofits and a toll-free phone line;
- appropriate \$27 million to remove barriers to coverage by shortening application forms, eliminating some verification requirements and removing the employee subsidized insurance barrier, which prohibits entrance to MinnesotaCare within 18 months of utilizing employee-subsidized benefits;
- smooth the transition from Medical Assistance to MinnesotaCare by making people automatically eligible for MinnesotaCare if they lose eligibility for Medical Assistance;
- allow small-business owners to buy into MinnesotaCare for their employees, and grant farmers easier access to the program; and
- eliminate the limited benefit set established in 2003 and increase eligibility for MinnesotaCare participants without children, the second at a cost of \$11 million.

Several health care reform provisions from the House were included in the omnibus bill, such as pilot projects for medical homes and incentive-based payment methods for physicians and patients.

The bill also included the governor's Health Exchange proposal, which would have established a system designed to help provide private insurance to all Minnesotans. In the exchange are 125 plans, which would give employees without insurance the option of buying plans with pre-tax dollars. That provision is also in the House omnibus tax bill, [HF2362](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington).

"What we're doing is less expansive than what we proposed before, but we'd still cover about 30,000 to 40,000 kids," said [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), who sponsors the [Cover all Kids bill](#).

The House also adopted the Senate plan for nursing homes. Facilities would have received a 3 percent increase in funding in 2008. Beginning in 2009, rates would be adjusted over a five-year period through rebasing, which helps reduce payment disparities between urban and rural nursing homes. Under the bill, the total appropriation for the industry would have been almost \$300 million in fiscal years 2010-11.

The [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#) also faced changes. The omnibus bill would have repealed \$19.5 million worth of penalties imposed in 2003, including the family

cap, which denies more cash assistance to families that bear children on the program; the Supplemental Security Income penalty, which revokes \$125 from a family's monthly MFIP grant if that family also receives federal SSI assistance; and \$25 of the \$50 housing penalty.

Members also made changes to work requirements. The bill called for the establishment of Family Stabilization Services, which would be designed to move hard-to-employ welfare participants, such as refugees and people with disabilities, off federally funded services.

The bill would also have counted 12 months of education and training towards work requirements, aligning Minnesota with federal policies.

"The idea was not just to get people off the welfare rolls, but to get them out of poverty," Huntley said on the House floor May 7. "We've been successful in getting people off the welfare rolls, but not so successful in getting people out of poverty."

Under the bill, mental health services would have received \$45 million in the biennium. Funding would have also been provided for the Veterans Home Board; child care; and public health. Many House provisions for environmental studies and tracking initiatives were eliminated in the final bill.

[HF297/SF2171](#)*/CH58 


Transportation continued from page 20

trunk highway interchanges and \$20.7 million for a Department of Transportation district headquarters building in Mankato.

"You can't keep running up the credit card. We could be using some of that debt service now," said [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls). Under the plan, the total highway debt

service in the forthcoming biennium would be \$139.25 million, a \$19 million increase. However, the plan does include a debt service surcharge on motor fuels, up to 2.5 cents to help with the costs.

The bill also calls for elimination of the \$99 and \$180 vehicle registration caps that

were enacted by former Gov. Jesse Ventura, it would increase driver's licenses by 75 cents and would provide for a wheelage tax of up to \$10 in the seven-county metropolitan area. All other counties would be exempt because of technology issues at the [Department of Driver and Vehicle Services](#). 

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Eighth District James L. Oberstar (DFL)

2365 Rayburn
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(202) 225-6211
Fax: (202) 225-0699

Come to the Capitol

Directions, Parking, Tours, Visiting the Legislature, Dining

Directions

The Capitol complex is north of I-94, just minutes from downtown St. Paul. It is accessible from the east and west on I-94, and from the north and south on I-35E.

- I-94 eastbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn left. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-94 westbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn right. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-35E northbound: Exit at Kellogg Boulevard. Turn left. Go to John Ireland Boulevard and turn right.
- I-35E southbound: Exit at University Avenue. Turn right. Go to Rice Street and turn left.

Parking

Public metered parking is available in Lot Q, north of the Capitol at Cedar Street and Sherburne Avenue; Lot AA, across Rice Street from the State Office Building on Aurora Avenue; Lot F, directly behind the Transportation Building; Lot H, west of the Veterans Service Building; Lot K, across from the Armory on Cedar Street (enter from 12th Street); Lot L, east of the Judicial Center; in the 14th Street Lot at the corner of North Robert Street and 14th Street; and on the orange level of the Centennial Office Building Ramp at Cedar Street and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. There are a few metered parking spots in front of the Capitol along Aurora Avenue.

Capitol Security personnel will issue tickets for expired meters.

All-day parking permits may be purchased for \$4 from Plant Management on the ground floor of the Administration Building at 50 Sherburne Ave., north of the Capitol, across University Avenue. Cash or checks are accepted. For more information, call (651) 201-2307.

Outdoor disability parking is available in most public lots within the State Capitol Complex. However, most spots can be found in Lot N and Lot F. Disability parking is also available on the orange level of the Centennial Office Parking Ramp and in the 14th Street Lot.

The main disability entrance to the Capitol is on the northwest side of the building just off Lot N. There also are drop-off entrances on the south side under the front steps on the south side and on the northeast side of the building.

Since parking is limited during legislative sessions, taking the public bus could be an option. Call the Transit Information Center at (612) 373-3333 for schedule and route information.

Visiting the Legislature

During session, all House and Senate floor sessions are open to the public. No pass is required for spectators to sit in the galleries of either chamber. The House usually meets at 12:30 p.m. Monday and

10 a.m. Thursday, and the Senate generally meets at 11 a.m. Monday and Thursday during the first few weeks of session. As the session nears the end, however, both bodies may meet several times a week, often into the night.

Visitors interested in observing these sessions may call House Public Information Services (651) 296-2146 or Senate Information (651) 296-0504, with questions.

Committee meetings are open to the public, as well. Visitors wanting to attend a committee meeting may call the committee hotlines for prerecorded messages with the meeting times and agendas for each day: House (651) 296-9283 or Senate (651) 296-8088.

If group members want to meet with their individual legislators or testify before a committee arrangements should be made at least a week in advance.

Sometimes groups plan a "legislative day" at the Capitol. For information on reserving a room for group conferences, call the State Office Building room scheduler at (651) 296-0306 or the Capitol room scheduler at (651) 296-0866.

Tours

Tours of the Capitol are offered through the Capitol Historic Site Program of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Tour guides lead the 45-minute tours on the hour Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. (last tour leaves at 3 p.m.); Saturday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (last tour leaves at 2 p.m.); and Sunday between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. (last tour leaves at 3 p.m.). The tours begin at the Capitol information desk. Brochures in about 20 foreign languages also are available there.

Tour rates vary. Generally, 45-minute tours for drop-in visitors to the Capitol are free of charge.

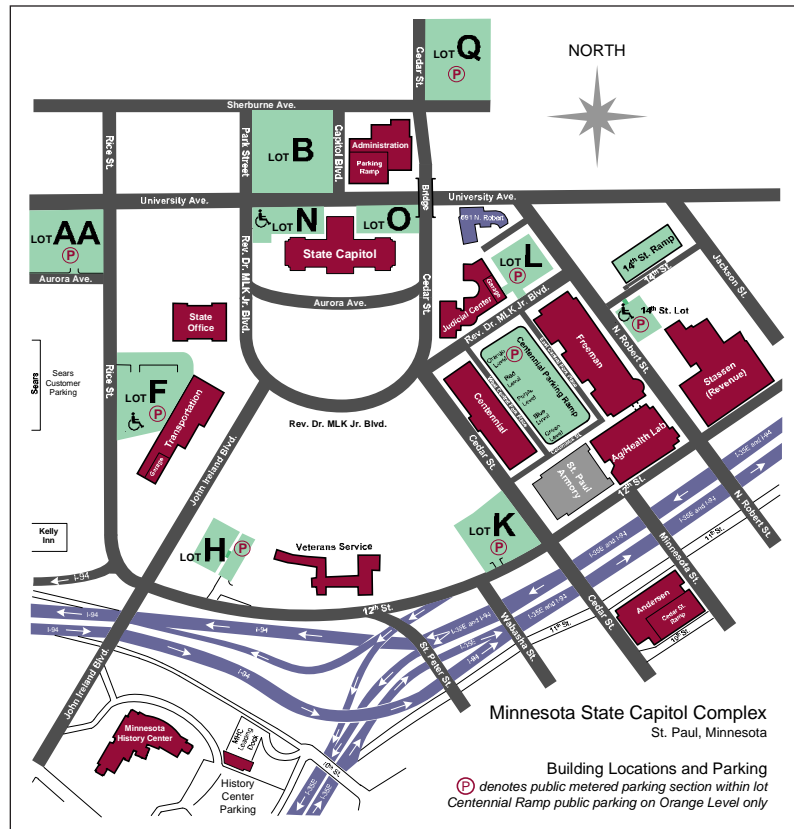
The society offers a number of specialized tours for educational groups ranging from pre-school students to high school seniors. Also, special tour events are scheduled throughout the year. Themes include "Art and Artists of the State Capitol" and "Shadows and Spirits of the State Capitol." Some of these events require admission fees. A special events guide is available upon request.

For more information about the tours and fee structure or to make a reservation, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881.

Dining

Year-round cafeterias can be found on the ground floor of the Transportation and the Centennial and Stassen buildings.

The small State Office Building cafeteria and the Rathskeller in the State Capitol are open only when the Legislature is in session.



Edited map courtesy Minnesota Department of Administration, Plant Management Division

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Hook, line and sinker

| | |
|--|---------|
| Date of 2007 Minnesota walleye season opener | May 12 |
| Minnesota's rank nationally in sales of fishing licenses per capita | 1 |
| Cost for resident seasonal individual fishing license..... | \$17 |
| Number of fish species found in the state..... | 158 |
| Length, in inches, of record walleye caught in state..... | 35.8 |
| Year caught | 1979 |
| Length, in inches, of average walleye caught and kept..... | 14 |
| Year walleye received designation as the state fish..... | 1965 |
| Number of walleyes allowed in possession per day | 6 |
| Walleye rank as most caught fish in state | 2 |
| Rank of panfish | 1 |
| Rank of northern..... | 3 |
| Average number of walleye stocked per year by DNR, in millions..... | 253 |
| Number of DNR walleye rearing ponds in state, on average..... | 325 |
| Percent of state's population 16 years and older holding a fishing license in 1970..... | 40 |
| Percent in 2006..... | 29 |
| Average number of days anglers spend fishing on lakes during spring, summer and fall | 4 |
| Number of resorts in state in 1970 | 2,000 |
| Approximate number in 2006..... | 900 |
| Square miles of water found within state | 7,326 |
| Number of fishable lakes in state | 5,493 |
| Number of counties in state with no natural lakes..... | 4 |
| Approximate total economic impact to state, in millions, relating to coldwater angling..... | \$156.7 |
| Approximate number of jobs supported in state by fishing industry | 50,000 |
| Number of minnow dealers and retailers in the state..... | 1,306 |

— L. SCHUTZ

Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Economic Impact of Fishing report; House Public Information Services; Explore Minnesota Tourism

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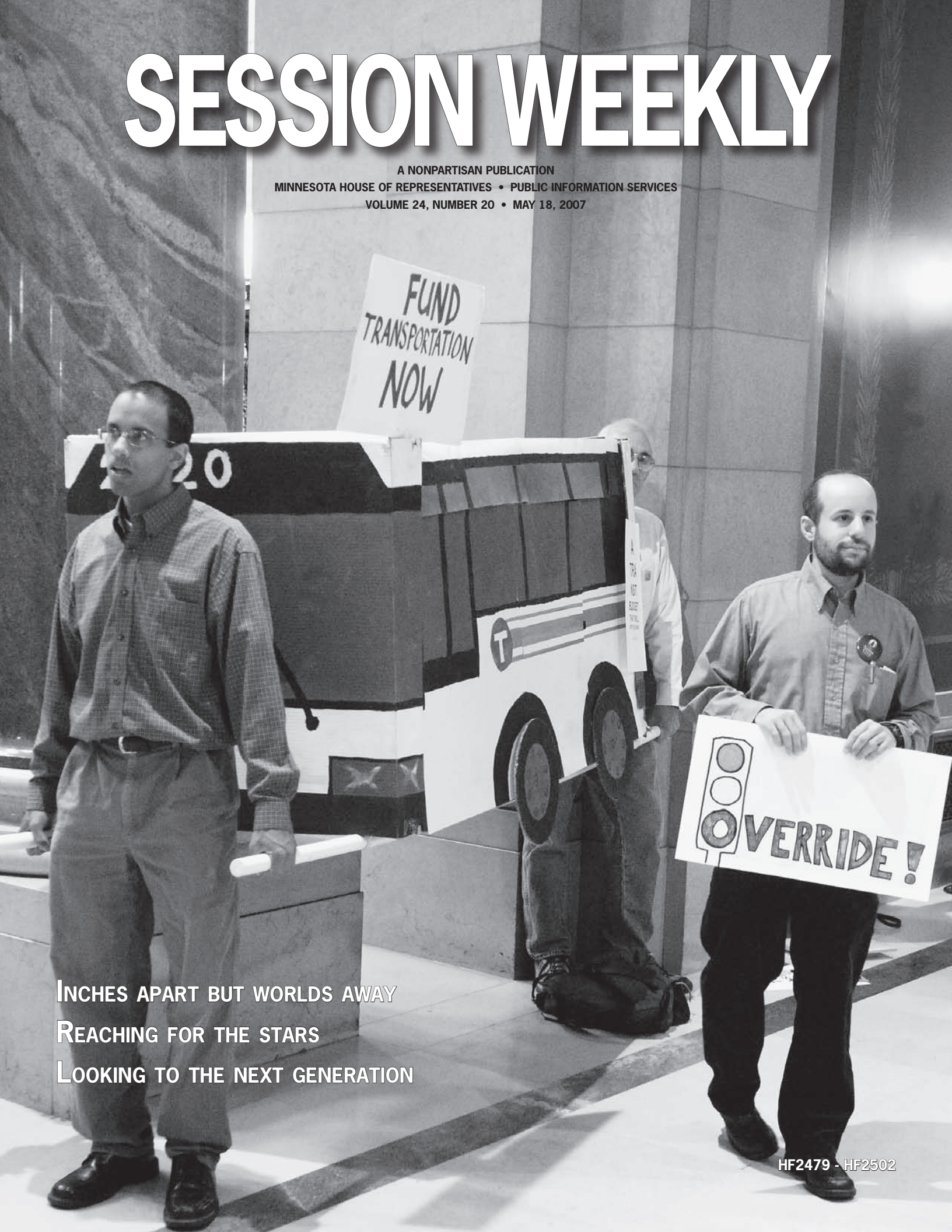
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SESSION WEEKLY

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 20 • MAY 18, 2007



INCHES APART BUT WORLDS AWAY
REACHING FOR THE STARS
LOOKING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: Joshua Houdek holds an "Override!" sign as Unnu Nambudiripad, left, and Rick Heimaark hold a model bus as the Coalition to Fund Transportation Now greeted House members arriving for the May 16 floor session. The group encouraged members to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of a transportation finance bill that included up to a 7.5-cent increase in the gas tax.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller indicates how close DFL leaders are to an agreement with Gov. Tim Pawlenty. He and House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher made frequent trips to the governor's office trying to work out a budget agreement May 17.

Inches away or worlds apart?

With time running out, legislators look for a compromise with the governor

BY SESSION WEEKLY STAFF

The more things change under the Capitol dome, the more they stay the same.

Legislators have found themselves scurrying to get budget bills passed and avoid a special session for the fourth straight budget-setting year and seventh in the past eight. But with a May 21 deadline quickly approaching, it will be close.

Battling the clock

As if House members needed any reminder, all week most had to walk past a digital clock outside Senate Republican offices in the State Office Building ticking off the time left for them to get their work done.

Six days before the constitutional adjournment, seven of the 12 major spending bills landing on the governor's desk had been vetoed, and arguably the two largest ones for

the session — E-12 education and taxes — had yet to be considered by either body. At least the Taxes Conference Committee was meeting; E-12 conferees hadn't gathered for a couple of weeks.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty's complaints with many of the bills were that they exceeded his recommended spending target, set forth in his \$34.4 billion budget released in January. He was also clear from the get-go that bills

containing tax increases would be vetoed, but legislators have tried anyway.

Another bone of contention was the unwillingness of House and Senate leaders to reveal a global picture of their intended biennial spending; rather, the information was being revealed piecemeal as each bill was acted upon.

So the parade of vetoes continued.

A new plan

As time continued to count down the primary question grew louder. Would there be enough time to craft new bills, get them passed and onto the governor's desk with enough left over to deal with a potential veto?

Senate leadership tried to breathe new life into the vetoed omnibus finance bills with trimmed down versions of previous conference committee reports.

First Reading continued on page 4

The Senate Rules and Administration Committee began a set of procedural moves May 15 to bring the economic development, health and human services, higher education, state government, taxes and E-12 education finance omnibus bills to the respective floors. Senate bill sponsors each said they took seriously the governor's veto messages and removed or modified policy provisions that he criticized.

Nonetheless, the governor had plenty to say about the lack of transparency used in crafting them.

"Given their style of negotiating, which is to send me bills that they know are unacceptable, I don't see how that's going to end in a timely or productive end of session," he said at a press conference to sign the smoking ban legislation. "No governor in my memory has been asked by the Legislature to veto one set of omnibus bills, much less two, as a way to negotiate an end to session. I think that's unprecedented. It's a troubling and very disturbing set of actions from my standpoint."

With a goal of getting the bills to the governor's desk before midnight, the Senate approved all six revised omnibus bills May 16, and sent them to the House, which acted on none.

Here's a look at where the yet-to-be-resolved major finance bills stand, as of 8 p.m. May 17.

Capital Investment

The \$334 million bonding bill was vetoed May 1, and no attempt has been made to revive the bill.

Pawlenty rejected [HF886](#)*/[SF2157](#) because it was more than four times larger than he requested. Traditionally, bonding bills in budget years are smaller.

Included in the plan was nearly \$70 million for higher education asset preservation, \$40 million for construction of the central corridor transitway between Minneapolis and St. Paul, \$37 million to pay half the cost of a new arena in Duluth, \$30 million for public infrastructure needed to support a steel plant in Itasca County, \$12.7 million for repairs to the Department of Transportation building in St. Paul and \$6.1 million for security upgrades and ventilation system work at Oak Park Heights prison.

"There has been no discussion yet on the bonding bill other than asking if we want one." The answer was 'yes,'" said [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul), who sponsors the bill with [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon). "I believe the governor wants a bonding bill because he has promised lots of people. This may be a very last minute discussion."

E-12 Education

Although conferees on the E-12 education finance bill have not met since April 30, a trio of budget groups met briefly in the following days.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) covers everything from voluntary all-day kindergarten to property tax relief. Included in the \$13.9 billion package is a 9.4 percent increase in biennial funding. The Senate version ([SF2095](#)) contains similar funding.

The result of a May 16 pre-dawn meeting, an amended version ([HF2245](#)) was passed 47-17 by the Senate. Although about \$200 million less than the first bill, it still would provide school districts a 2 percent increase in state funding next year, but zero for 2008-09. Approximately \$387 million in new money would go to special education.

As of press time, the bill awaits action by the full House. However, [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the House E-12 Education Committee, predicted the bill "will not be the final product." He said the sides are close to an agreement.

Economic Development

Approved [84-44](#) by the House and [42-22](#) by the Senate May 4, the \$448.8 million omnibus economic development finance bill ([SF2089](#)) was vetoed by the governor three days later because, among other reasons, it spent \$56 million more than he requested and Pawlenty said it would be detrimental to business.

Among the areas funded in the bill were the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), [Department of Labor and Industry](#), [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#), [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#) and the [Minnesota Historical Society](#).

It also included \$41 million in new funding for housing issues, increased funding for youth programs by \$13.5 million, would have created a small business growth acceleration program to help qualified companies implement technology and business improvements, required every licensed health care facility in the state to adopt a safe patient handling program, established restricted journeyman and restricted master plumber licenses, and created a packinghouse workers bill of rights.

[Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), who sponsors the bill with [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown), said the revised package is \$35 million less, including \$5 million in ongoing money. Among its other changes are the removal of a severance disregard for receiving unemployment benefits, less money is allocated to help replenish the Minnesota Minerals 21st Century Fund and softened packinghouse worker language.

Murphy said May 17 that she expects the House to take up jobs and economic development very much like the form of the negotiated bill passed by the Senate.

Health and Human Services

The governor quickly rejected the omnibus health and human services finance bill,



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

As they leave the State Office Building for the May 14 floor session, [Rep. Brita Sailer](#), from left, [Rep. John Ward](#) and [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) pass a countdown clock displays the time remaining in the 2007 legislative session. Senate Republicans put the clock outside their offices to remind everyone of the approaching constitutional deadline.

Big Bills Receiving Thumbs Up



Omnibus Agriculture and Veterans Finance Bill

Status: Signed into law May 4 with line-item vetoes

Session travel: Passed the House April 17 131-2 and the Senate 65-0 April 19

Sponsors: Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar) and Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy)

Total 2008-09 General Fund spending: \$168.3 million

Highlights: Provides more than \$64 million for veterans and military programs, including money for officer enlistment bonuses; expansion of veterans higher education offices; and more than \$104 million for agriculture-related initiatives, including renewable energy grants and creation of the Next Generation Renewable Energy Board.

Comments: "We don't exactly know what we are going to need to help these combat veterans reintegrate. But we are going to be prepared regardless of their needs. We're just planning for the unknown. It is a silent way of saying 'thank you.'"

From the ag portion of the bill: "Basically what this bill is bringing us is research and development for our future. You will see our colleges start training folks in this new economic development field of renewable energy. And then those new workers will be moving to, and living in, rural Minnesota, and we're trying to keep that newfound wealth at home and have it circulate through our communities."

— REP. AL JUHNKE (DFL-WILLMAR)

Omnibus Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Finance Bill

Status: Signed May 8 with line-item vetoes

Session travel: Passed May 4 by the Senate 64-1 and by the House 97-30

Sponsors: Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul)

Total 2008-09 General Fund spending: \$440 million

Highlights: Boosts funding for Clean Water Legacy programs and renewable energy research and development. Policy provisions include a venison donation program for deer hunters; stricter requirements for land developers to replace wetlands; new restrictions on off-road vehicle usage on state lands; and language intended to lay the groundwork for using the state's native prairie grasses as biomass for use in cellulosic ethanol. Line-item vetoes included money for a rural wind energy program and several local projects.

Comments: "The environment policy [portion of the bill] is extraordinarily important. One of the things we did is make sure there was enough money to assess waters and to do the studies that show where pollution comes from. ... We set the table for using prairies for biofuels, which was challenging because we have very little prairie seed left in Minnesota. ... And, we did lots of great things in energy. ... I think it's a good bill."

— REP. JEAN WAGENIUS (DFL-MPLS)

Omnibus Public Safety Finance Bill

Status: Signed into law May 7

Session travel: Passed the House 96-34 April 17 and the Senate 63-0 April 18.

Sponsors: Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls)

Total 2008-09 General Fund spending: \$1.87 billion

Highlights: Provides \$936.7 million for the Department of Corrections, including resources for re-entry and youth intervention programs; \$614.32 million for the court system, including funding for seven new judgeships; and \$304.8 million for the Department of Public Safety.

Comments: "I feel very good about what we were able to accomplish, and if you look at the vote totals in both the House and the Senate, you can see there was overwhelming bipartisan support. ... We were able to do some things differently in the way we addressed crime prevention, and how we deal with offenders and recidivism rates. ... We also dealt with crime victims and support programs that did not have the level of funding needed. In providing public safety for the citizens of Minnesota, I think we hit a home run."

— REP. MICHAEL PAYMAR (DFL-ST. PAUL)

signing his veto message May 8, less than 24 hours after the Senate passed the bill 47-19 and the House 88-44.

At the time, the bill, sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) and Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), spent \$537.1 million in General Fund and other dollars on health care initiatives, nursing homes, welfare programs, child care, mental health and public health.

Conferees briefly reconvened the following week to trim down spending, and eventually cut \$50 million in fiscal years 2008-09 and \$87 million in fiscal years 2010-11 from the bill, which included a 0.25 percent drop in nursing home funding in fiscal year 2008 and an \$18 million reduction in mental health grants. Leadership also eliminated the governor's "Healthy Connection" proposal, which focused on several health care reforms.

General Fund expenditures now rest at \$305.5 million above base, though Huntley expressed skepticism that levels wouldn't decrease further.

"We already cut about \$100 million from the bill, and it looks like we're going to cut more," he said.

Following the changes, the legislation was rolled into HF1078, a bill that would have originally changed hospitals public interest review requirements.

The Senate passed the omnibus bill 44-21 May 16. The House has yet to debate it.

Higher Education

The latest proposal (HF1063) was approved 64-0 by the Senate.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), who sponsored the original bill with Sen. Sandy

Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), said May 17 that the bill has been received by the House, but he was unsure if it would be acted upon, dependent on the outcome of budget negotiations.

The revised \$3.16 billion bill comes in \$39.6 million below the governor for the upcoming biennium, and is nearly \$75.8 million above the governor's recommendation for the 2010-11 biennium. The latter number is \$20 million below what was previously proposed, and there is some concern it may not be enough.

In his May 9 veto letter, Pawlenty said that committing to that much spending "will severely limit the funds available for other priorities such as K-12 education."

Other changes made from the original bill include: a \$2 million increase in the GI Bill,

First Reading continued on page 20

Editor's Note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held May 10-17, other House activity and bills that have been signed into law. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlights summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House or the bill language signed by the governor.

CONSUMERS

Protection for car buyers

Consumers could have better protection when buying cars, under a bill passed 104-27 by the House May 15.

Sponsored by **Rep. Steve Simon** (DFL-St. Louis Park) and **Sen. Ron Latz** (DFL-St. Louis Park), **HF1675/SF1333*** would require dealers to disclose service installment contract requirements, and the use of credit reports, and it would define "certified" used motor vehicle.

Buying a car is the second biggest purchase people can make, and the bill would give more information and protection to consumers, Simon said.

The bill would make it unlawful for a dealer to say a vehicle meets the terms of a certified used motor vehicle if the dealer knows or should know:

- that the odometer does not indicate actual mileage, has been rolled back, altered or replaced;
- the vehicle was reacquired by the manufacturer or a dealer because of state or federal warrants;
- the title has been inscribed with the notation damaged, flood, junk, lemon law buyback, manufacturer repurchase, non-repairable or rebuilt; and
- the vehicle has sustained damage in an impact, fire, flood or sustained frame damage.

Prior to the execution of a retail installment contract, a seller would need to provide to a buyer a written disclosure to include a description of the total price of all items sold. This would include a service contract, insurance product, debt cancellation agreement, theft deterrent device, surface protection product and the amount that would be calculated under the contract as the regular installment payment for the listed items.

An amendment successfully offered by **House Minority Leader Marty Seifert**

(R-Marshall) removed a provision allowing a customer to cancel a contract. Seifert said the provision would have allowed people to purchase a car for more than \$40,000, return it stripped of parts, and only pay a restocking fee up to \$500.

Simon said the bill already contains safeguards from that and the restocking fee would not be in the financial interest of those returning stripped vehicles.

As amended, the bill returns to the Senate, where it was approved 40-25 March 29.

— P. OSTBERG

Full value gift cards

Many gift cards would not expire, under a bill awaiting action by the governor.

Sponsored by **Rep. Joe Atkins** (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and **Sen. Katie Sieben** (DFL-Newport), **HF512/SF69*** would make it unlawful for a business to sell a gift card that has an expiration date or a service fee of any kind, including for nonuse.

Amended by the House to provide that it would apply only to gift cards sold on or after the proposed Aug. 1, 2007, effective date, the bill was passed **95-37** May 15 and 50-8 by the Senate the next day.

The bill would exempt:

- cards distributed for loyalty or promotional reasons without money given in exchange;
- cards distributed for employee recognition;
- cards sold below face value to employers or nonprofit organizations for fund-raisers;
- prepaid calling cards;
- debit cards used to access a debit account; and
- cards that can be used at multiple sellers or goods and services, such as a mall card, provided any expiration date and associated fees are disclosed. These are typically bank-issued cards subject to federal regulations.

Supporters have said that some gift cards have expiration dates as short as six months. "You can buy one at Thanksgiving, give it over the holidays and by Spring Break the gift card has no value," Atkins said.

No longer in the bill is a provision that would have allowed a cardholder to receive cash if less than \$5 remained on the card; nor is one that would have allowed cardholders to pay their bills using a gift card.

— M. COOK

DEAR READERS:

The Legislature is constitutionally required to adjourn by midnight, May 21. With several outstanding issues yet to be resolved, the House will likely meet through the weekend to finish its business.

Assuming legislators finish their work on time, the final issue of Session Weekly is to be published May 25, and will include summaries of final actions of the session; however, if there is a special session, the last issue of Session Weekly will not be produced until legislators finish their work, be it June 1, July 1 or later.

Updated information is also available at the Session Daily Web site at www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/sdaily.asp.

SESSION WEEKLY STAFF

Cold Belgian brews and more

Strong beers brewed in Minnesota, like Schell and Summit brands, could be available this year for beer drinkers at the Minnesota State Fair under the omnibus liquor bill, passed by the House May 14. The vote was 111-21.

Sponsored by **Rep. Joe Atkins** (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and **Sen. Sandy Pappas** (DFL-St. Paul), **HF1958/SF1070*** would allow liquor licenses to be sold to establishments within a half-mile of the state fairgrounds and at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. Other provisions would allow for larger bottles for brewing beer, on-sale licenses for farm wineries and increased maximum fees for off-sale intoxicating liquor licenses issued by cities.

As amended, the bill passed the Senate 56-4 May 15.

Under the bill, vendors would be permitted to sell more than 3.2 percent beer at the state fair and other fairground events, "provided that at least one Minnesota brewed malt liquor is made available for sale at each allowed location within the grounds."

Opposition was raised over a proposed \$100 reduction in the annual license fee for off-sale licenses issued by cities, if certain conditions are met. One condition includes a cash reward and incentive program to be established by a licensee to reward employees for catching underage drinkers, and would establish a penalty program to punish employees if they fail a compliance check.

One brewmaster told a House committee that under current law he is unable to sell or serve his homemade Belgian beer in the traditional fashion because of current bottle-size regulations. The bill would permit 750 milliliter bottles traditional to Belgian beers

REMEMBERING PEACE OFFICERS



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Scott Dahlquist, left, of the Minneapolis Police Department, and Dennis Lindahl of the Minnesota State Patrol's Marshall District, present the colors in the House Chamber May 15 in recognition of Peace Officers Memorial Day.

to be sold by small brewers and brew pubs.

It is illegal for liquor stores to donate bottles of wine for charitable events such as a silent auction. Under the bill, cities may issue a temporary exclusive liquor store license to a nonprofit organization once a year for charitable events. The funds from sales must be dedicated to the charitable purpose and the donation could not exceed five bottles for wine, 24 beer bottles and 1 liter of intoxicating liquors.

— P. OSTBERG

Stay near the gas nozzle

**Signed
by
the
governor**

People filling their vehicles with gas will have to stay close to the dispenser nozzle, under a new law signed May 10 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by **Rep. Joe Atkins** (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and **Sen. Debbie Johnson** (R-Ham Lake), the law states those who violate the requirement would not be subject to civil or criminal penalties. Those selling petroleum are required to post signs at locations notifying people of the requirement, and those who violate it could be denied fuel services.

This portion is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

Bob Krogman, executive director of the Minnesota Petroleum Marketers Association, said as more people pay for gas at the pump, they are also walking away from their vehicle to enter a station building. Occasionally pumps don't kick off when a tank reaches capacity, and the result can be gallons of fuel on a drive area leading to safety hazards. The change will hopefully deter people from leaving the vehicle while pumping gas, he said.

The law also modifies petroleum terms and updates specifications for petroleum products. Definitions for "biodiesel blend" and "biodiesel fuel" are included in the changes.

Biodiesel blend will mean "a blend of diesel fuel and biodiesel fuel at a ratio designated by 'BXX' and 'XX' represents the volume percent of biodiesel fuel in the blend," according to the law.

Biodiesel fuel will mean "a renewable, biodegradable, mono alkyl ester combustible liquid that is derived from agricultural plant oils or animal fats and that meets American Society for Testing and Materials specification D6751-07 for biodiesel (B100) blend stock for distillate fuels."

This portion is effective July 1, 2007.

HF2045/SF1193*/CH62

— P. OSTBERG

DEVELOPMENT

Airport zoning disclosure

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, a new law replaces an existing one regarding disclosure of airport zoning regulations.

Under the new provision, a property seller will be exempt from disclosing the regulations to prospective buyers of real estate if they give timely written notice that a copy of the zoning regulations is available at the county recorder's office where the zoned area is located.

Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee), who sponsors the law with **Sen. Ann Rest** (DFL-New Hope), said legislation passed in 2006 regarding real estate disclosures when a transaction takes place within 1 mile of an airport was modeled after language from a national organization. However, it turned out not to be the best language for Minnesota, so a number of groups, including builder and realtor associations, worked together to create the new language.

HF556/SF218*/CH64

— M. COOK

EDUCATION

Updated math standards

From kindergarteners “counting with or without objects, forward and back to at least 20” to high schoolers “using the relationship between conditional probabilities and relative frequencies in contingency tables,” the revised state math standards will be more rigorous beginning in the 2007-08 school year.

The House E-12 Education Committee and Senate Education Committee heard testimony May 10 on the new Department of Education [revised standards](#) to be implemented in June, but took no action.

The 2006 legislation prompted the change. Schools have three years to align curriculum to the new standards. The first assessment test based on the new curriculum is scheduled to occur in the spring of 2011.

Starting in June 2007, the new math standards will require students to take Algebra I, or its equivalent, in the eighth grade and Algebra II, or its equivalent, for graduation.

“One of the requirements here was that the standards get students to be college- and work-ready,” said Larry Gray, head of the [University of Minnesota School of Mathematics](#). He said that students need the fourth year of math in high school to retain their knowledge for college, especially if they are going into engineering.

By requiring students to complete Algebra I by the eighth grade, the department sees this affecting other grades as well. In a written statement, they said that sixth grade students must master arithmetic with decimals and fractions, and seventh grade students must master material about proportional relationships with equations with variables.

Other education standards will be revised in the coming years: science in the 2008-09 school year, language arts/reading during the 2009-10 school year, and social studies one year later.

— S. HARDING

EMPLOYMENT

Saying no to nurse overtime

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Nurses employed at state facilities will have the same ability to say no to extra work as those in the private sector.

Because some nurses felt they were being forced into too many overtime hours because of intimidation, a 2002 law permits a nurse to refuse mandatory overtime without consequences from their employer if he or she feels tired or sick and

TEACHER OF THE YEAR



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Michael Smart, Minnesota's 2007 Teacher of the Year, is recognized on the House floor May 11 for his achievement. Smart teaches Japanese studies at Robbinsdale Armstrong High School.

believes it is in the best interest of the nurse and patients not to be in a caregiver role during those hours.

The new law, effective Aug. 1, 2007, adds state-employed nurses involved in resident or patient care, regardless of the type of facility. It does not supersede a valid collective bargaining agreement.

[Corrections Department](#) employees are not included in the law until July 1, 2008, because of a potential cost to the department.

However, the department is to develop a budget and plan for compliance and report to the Legislature by Feb. 1, 2008. The report must include department procedures for hiring and scheduling nurses; daily staffing, including the ratio of supervisors to nurses, and the rationale behind the ratio; the number of pool nurses used; and the average annual expenses on pool nurses and overtime at each facility.

[Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul) sponsor the law. [HF966*/SF817/CH46](#)

— M. COOK

Meeting training requirements

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Veterans have some assurance they will have a chance to get caught up on any new training required to keep a state license or certification related to their job current.

A new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 9, clarifies statute and requires that any job-related education or training to keep a license current must be provided and paid for by the

veteran's employer. It also specifies that the need for training must not be used as a means to delay the licensee's or registrant's reemployment.

“When a person is in the service and has a state license, the old law says you are not going to be punished if that license goes out of date while you are in the service. That holds for six months after you get out of service,” said [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt). The clarification affects occupations like law enforcement, where training in firearms and deadly force procedures is ongoing.

The law is effective May 10, 2007.

[HF272*/SF699/CH51](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

ENVIRONMENT

Omnibus policy bill approved

One late night was all it took for a conference committee to hash out an agreement on the omnibus environment and natural resources policy bill, which covers topics ranging from hunting and fishing to state parks and trails.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) and [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley), the conference committee report on [HF1021/SF1131*](#) combines language from numerous House and Senate bills, including the House's omnibus game and fish bill. Approved May 16 by the conferees, it now goes back to the House and Senate for approval.

The bill would make changes to a variety of the state's hunting and fishing laws, add lands to certain state parks and permit the

sale or transfer of certain state lands. Several key changes were made by the conference committee, including:

- removing Senate language that sought to restrict outdoor light pollution;
- delaying implementation of new [Pollution Control Agency](#) phosphorus discharge limits on wastewater facilities until May 1, 2008;
- legalizing the use of crossbows to take deer during the regular firearms season for any hunter with a valid firearms license;
- removing a Senate-sponsored prohibition on new licenses to raise minnows in certain water bodies;
- eliminating a House-sponsored increase on the cock pheasant bag limit after Dec. 1, 2007;
- removing a proposal to loosen eligibility requirements for disabled persons to hunt from a vehicle; and
- eliminating proposed changes to the state's sucker fish spearing season.

New provisions adopted by the conference committee that were not included in the House version of the bill include a "Minnesota Travel Green" program to be developed by [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#) and the [Department of Natural Resources](#) and a provision that would allow off-trail snowmobile use in closed forests.

— N. BUSSE

Uniform Environmental Covenants Act

The House passed a bill May 14 that would allow for the establishment of environmental covenants that regulate, limit or prohibit certain activities or uses of land.

HF1063, sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), would enact the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act, which has already been adopted by more than a dozen other states. Passed 124-7, it now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is the sponsor.

The bill would set uniform terms and conditions for agreements to clean up environmentally contaminated lands. Simon said he knows of no opposition to the bill, and that Minnesota would be the "17th or 18th" state to enact it.

"No one gains or loses any rights by this; it's just creating a new tool that can be used," Simon said.

He said the two main benefits of the act are that it "puts land back in the stream of commerce" and it "enforces land promises into the future, beyond the present owners."

The bill's language is also contained in the omnibus environment and natural resources policy bill, [HF1021/SF1131*](#), which is currently in conference committee. [Rep. David Dill](#)

(DFL-Crane Lake) and [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook) are the sponsors.

— N. BUSSE

Progress on dedicated funding

A bill that would provide dedicated funding for the environment and the arts is making steady progress, despite hitting a brief snag in the House Taxes Committee.

HF2285, sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), would propose a constitutional amendment to raise the state sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent and dedicate the new revenue to fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage. If passed by the Legislature, it would have to be submitted for voter approval on the 2008 ballot.

The House Taxes Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee both approved the bill May 16. As of publication time, it awaits action by the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee, after which it is expected to go to the House floor. A similar proposal, [SF6](#), sponsored by [Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed 52-14 by the Senate May 11 and laid on the table.

Sertich and other supporters say the bill is needed to address a funding crisis in the environment and the arts, while opponents contend that dedicating funding through the constitution abdicates the Legislature's responsibility to set the state's budget statutorily.

"I'm voting no on this, and it's not because I'm against funding for the outdoors or the arts. It's because I'm against giving up the legislative job I got elected to do and then tying the hands of future Legislatures," [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) told members of the House Taxes Committee May 16.

Members of the committee, including Rukavina, voted May 15 to amend the bill so that the question submitted to voters would include the following sentence: "By voting yes on this question, you are voting for a tax increase." The bill was then tabled until the next day, when the committee voted 11-10 to remove the amendment.

— N. BUSSE

Under a new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 8, a person who was adopted or placed in Department of Human Services guardianship, and is at least 19 years old, may have access to their siblings' contact information. The law specifies, however, that this release of contact information can be provided only upon mutual consent.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the law, which takes effect Aug. 1, also instructs agencies at all levels to assist and share information with siblings they have served or can serve. Agencies are permitted to charge a reasonable fee for the service.

[HF1400/SF358*/CH49](#)

— M. SIMPSON

GOVERNMENT

More rulemaking authority

Signed
by
the
governor

The Department of Administration commissioner will be able to adopt rules relating to surplus property acquisition, distribution and disposal, under a new law signed May 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), the new law will add the surplus property to a list that already includes:

- solicitations and responses to solicitations, bid security, vendor errors, opening responses, award of contracts, tied bids and award protest process;
- contract performance and failure to perform;
- authority to debar or suspend vendors, and reinstatement of vendors;
- contract cancellations;
- procurement from rehabilitation facilities; and
- organizational conflicts of interest.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

Kent Allin, director of the department's materials management division, told a House committee the rules were last revised in 1983, and that the change would bring it "into the 21st century."

[HF1493/SF2030*/CH67](#)

— P. OSTBERG

FAMILY

Sibling connection

Signed
by
the
governor

Children separated from their genetic siblings because of their parents' rights having been terminated will have an easier time connecting with each other.

Dig carefully

Those who would intentionally damage burial grounds could be guilty of a felony, under a bill passed May 15 by the House [85-46](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), [HF1710/SF2226*](#) clarifies criminal provisions for those who intentionally destroy, mutilate or injure human burials or burial grounds.

The bill was amended with the House language and returned to the Senate, which did not concur. A conference committee has been appointed to work out a compromise.

There are about 12,500 known burial mounds in the state and more than 6,000 known cemeteries, State Archaeologist Scott Anfinson previously told a House committee. A good percentage are unrecorded in county recorder offices, and his job is to authenticate those unrecorded burials that are more than 50 years old.

"I literally get a call every day from realtors or landowners asking what they can do on their property because they may have Indian mounds or a white cemetery," he said. The bill helps to clarify for landowners and all involved how to proceed.

Jim Jones, cultural resources director for the [Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#), said the last few years have led to accidental unearthing in burial sites. The bill's clarifying language would help deal with these situations, he said.

[Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) said the bill should go back for a hearing in the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee because of the penalties in the bill, and it allows the state archeologist to enter onto private property without permission of the landowner.

Hilty said the bill doesn't really change anything related to penalties or access to lands, but it rearranges statute wording to make it more understandable.

— P. OSTBERG

Future fuel purchasing

Signed
by
the
governor

State agencies now use the practice of forward pricing when purchasing facility fuels.

This allows agencies to purchase a fuel block at current prices as a hedge against a rise in energy prices in the future. Fuel purchased in bulk includes natural gas, heating oil and propane, but does not include electricity.

A new law signed May 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty will add diesel fuel to the list. It is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

"It's an opportunity for the state to save money with its fleets and other things," said [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris).

[HF1555/SF1902*/CH68](#)

— S. HARDING

Indian Affairs Council membership

The composition of the [Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#) would change, under a bill passed by the House 110-22 May 15.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-

Finlayson) and [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), [HF1051/SF1048*](#) would allow certain bands and tribes to have one member designated by elected tribal presidents or chairpersons of their governing body to the council. The designees would be the only voting council members. Currently voting members are the elected tribal leaders of the individual bands and tribes.

According to its Web site, the council "serves as the official liaison of the Indian tribes and the state of Minnesota." Other designated council members include directors or commissioners of each tribal agency as designated and three House and three Senate members.

The Senate passed a different version of the bill 64-0 April 12. A conference has been appointed to work out the differences.

The bill would make the arrangement of tribal leaders parallel to that of commissioners appointed to the council by the governor, Hilty said. It would also update references to "Indian community" to "tribal sovereign nations in Minnesota and the urban Indian communities."

Noting that all American Indians within state borders are Minnesotans, [Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton) said the bill goes against the state constitution by separating out a specific group of people "who live among us." This would further divide those in the state, she said.

— P. OSTBERG

State contracts ratified

Signed
by
the
governor

State labor agreements and compensation plans approved during the 2006 interim by the [Legislative Coordinating Commission Subcommittee on Employee Relations](#) are now law, upon signature May 10 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Under the new law, labor agreements are ratified for the Minnesota Law Enforcement Association and Minnesota Nurses Association. Also included are amendments to the compensation plan for unrepresented employees of the Office of Higher Education and salary increases for the directors of the Gambling Control Board, Public Employees Retirement Association, Minnesota State Retirement System and Teachers Retirement Association.

The law, sponsored by [Rep. Leon Lillie](#) (DFL-North St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), is effective May 11, 2007.

According to its Web site, the subcommittee provides "interim approval of negotiated agreements, arbitration awards, and compensation plans for employees in the executive branch."

[HF1598/SF1073*/CH63](#)

— P. OSTBERG

Hire from layoff list first

State agencies would be required to exhaust their senior employee layoff lists before they could contract for professional services. The bill was passed by the House 92-39 on May 14.

Under the bill ([HF548](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), agencies could not contract out jobs eliminated in the previous four years without first considering former employees on seniority unit layoff lists — nor could they contract for services in excess of \$5,000 without first considering laid off employees on the list.

Simon said the bill "would give a fair shake to laid off state workers who are on a recall list."

Richard Kolodziejewski, legislative affairs director for the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees told a House committee that concern has been expressed by information technology employees. He cited a statement on the governor's [Web site](#) stating the state will encourage competition through pricing and outsourcing, while increasing the use of technology in government services. Employees are concerned that the governor's upcoming trade visit to India could lead to outsourcing of state jobs, he said.

In opposition, [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) said the Legislature should not be micromanaging the labor management negotiations process.

The bill was amended and passed 42-22 by the Senate May 16. It will now be returned to the House. [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley) is the Senate sponsor.

— P. OSTBERG

Updating the recordkeeping

Signed
by
the
governor

All officers and agencies of the state must keep records preserving a full and accurate knowledge of their official activities.

A new law signed by May 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty clarifies requirements for storing digital government records, and repeals a section of the law that deals with documents stored on non-erasable optical imaging systems.

Supporters said the law is needed because technology used by the state to archive records is becoming outdated.

"What looked exotic five years ago looks outdated now," State Archivist Robert Horton told a House committee. "Today much more effective and cost-effective storage technology exists."

The new law will encourage government entities to choose those better technologies, and it will help the government and the Minnesota Historical Society to do their job better, he said.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin) and [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), the law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1339/SF1557*/CH76](#)

— S. HARDING

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

No smoking

Signed
by
the
governor

“No smoking” signs will soon proliferate across Minnesota, with a new law signed May 16 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty that bans smoking in public places statewide.

Called the “Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007,” the law prohibits smoking in restaurants, bars, bingo halls and on public transit. It takes effect Oct. 1, 2007.

“This is the bill that sets the slate, sets the standard for Minnesota and our health for us, for our kids and for our future,” [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) said before House approval was given [81-48](#) May 11. The Senate passed the bill [43-21](#) earlier in the day.

Minnesota is the 20th state to ban smoking indoors.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), the law exempts family farms, a disabled rest camp, commercial vehicles, hotel rooms and theatrical performances.

Debate over the bill focused on recurring issues over the ban: a worker’s right to clean air, a person’s right to smoke freely and the potential economic consequences for bar and restaurant owners.

“I’m concerned about the many, many people that you’re going to put out of business — their lives decimated,” [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) said.

The law allows local governments to impose stricter measures against smoking, and grants hospitality employees access to the Dislocated Worker Program until October 2009 should they become unemployed due to the ban.

[HF305/SF238*/CH82](#)

— M. SIMPSON

Family planning support

A bill to expand purchasing power for family planning clinics underwent several changes, but now awaits action by a conference committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF298/SF184*](#) would allow nonprofit family planning clinics to enter into joint powers agreements with local governments to allow cheaper purchase of pharmaceutical drugs and medical supplies. The bill would also grant registered nurses the legal right to distribute contraceptives.

Originally passed 62-1 by the Senate May 11, it was amended in the House and passed 131-3 May 15. However, the Senate did not concur with the House changes and a conference committee was requested.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) deleted a section that would have required the commissioner of human services to adjust medical assistance rates for family planning services.

“This is just a backdoor way of providing family planning funding,” he said. “It should be done another way.”

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) would require parental notification if children age 12 or younger receive oral contraceptives from a clinic, but a 48-hour timetable was removed from the provision.

Opponents protested the implications of the joint powers agreement language.

Reps. [Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood) said the powers would extend beyond bulk purchasing; they might also make these clinics eligible for municipalities’ \$300,000 liability cap.

“They’re going to be capped at the government liability limits,” Kohls said. “Maybe that’s not what you intended to do, but that’s absolutely the result.”

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) disagreed.

“These units wouldn’t be a governmental unit outside of the bulk purchasing agreement,” he said. “And I think governmental units are going to be wise with this authority.”

An amendment successfully offered by [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), would prohibit family planning clinics from providing taxpayer-funded abortions.

“It’s already quite clear that these agencies, if they get family grants, that they can’t use any of that money for abortions,” Huntley said. “So that’s not what that money is for.”

— M. SIMPSON

Licensing requirements

Conference committee members gave quick approval to the omnibus licensing bill, which affects licensing requirements for a variety of health and human services professionals.

Sponsored by [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF57/SF26*](#) must return to both bodies for passage before heading to the governor’s desk for action.

The House and Senate came into committee agreeing on a majority of provisions, including:

- new exam requirements for incoming X-ray operators beginning Jan. 1, 2008;
- language permitting the [Board of Medical Practice](#) to grant exam extensions if an applicant is diagnosed with a medical illness;
- exam flexibility for foreign medical students who want to practice in the United States;
- an increase in the number of seats on the [Board of Physical Therapy](#), and greater regulation of physical therapist assistants; and
- several changes to social work licensing requirements, specifically for professionals who are foreign-born or in training.

The bill would also affect boards relating to chiropractors and pharmacists.

[Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) successfully offered an amendment addressing a need for



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Thomas Huntley and Sen. Kathleen Sheran, sponsors of the smoking ban legislation, talk outside the House Chamber May 10 prior to the House adopting the conference committee report.

one Minnesota woman. She could be granted a year-long extension to complete her licensing requirement because her husband is in Iraq, and as a mother of two, she is also working full-time.

Abeler also advocated unsuccessfully for a House provision that would make licensed professional clinical counselors eligible for state reimbursement.

Marty said the measure would have to be pushed back a year due to the fiscal note.

— M. SIMPSON

Essential provider status

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Essential community providers, known as ECPs, coordinate services for some of Minnesota's neediest populations: people at-risk, the underserved and those with special needs.

A law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 8 will reinstate the health commissioner's authority to designate and renew the status of these providers. It takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), the measure also requires that providers reapply for ECP standing every five years and caps the application fee at \$60.

Currently, the health commissioner is not authorized to accredit essential community providers because statute assigning that authority has expired.

[HF918/SF555*/CH50](#)

— M. SIMPSON

HOUSING

Fighting mortgage fraud

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law aims to stop rip-off mortgagors without hurting legitimate mortgage brokers.

For example, a lender or mortgage broker will be prohibited from making or arranging a new mortgage loan to refinance a so-called "special mortgage" unless the borrower has received qualified mortgage counseling on whether the move is a good idea.

Examples of special mortgages include one that a borrower obtained from a government or nonprofit entity and that contains favorable terms, such as payments that vary with income or that are forgivable.

The law also bans prepayment penalties on subprime loans; prohibits a residential mortgage originator making a loan from charging, receiving or collecting any prepayment penalty, fee, premium or other charge; and gives Minnesotans the right to sue mortgage lenders, brokers and servicers for violation of certain laws.

Unscrupulous lenders could be convicted of residential mortgage fraud, and receive up to two years behind bars; however, harsher penalties could be imposed if the victim is deemed vulnerable based on age, physical condition or mental capacity.

[Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsor the law, which takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF931/SF988*/CH74](#)

— M. COOK



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Claudia Carlisle gathered with other health care, social justices, anti-poverty, mental health, disability, faith-based, labor and children advocacy organizations May 16 to encourage more funding for the omnibus health and human services finance bill.

INSURANCE

Colorectal screening coverage

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Minnesota insurance companies will be forced to cover colorectal screening tests, under a new law signed May 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), the law is effective May 15, 2007.

These tests will join a list of other routine cancer screening procedures, such as mammograms, pap smears and ovarian surveillance tests, that are currently under a coverage mandate by the state.

[HF1287/SF1705*/CH66](#)

— M. SIMPSON

Shifting insurance liability

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on May 14 now makes fact what many Minnesotans already believe to be true — that when they rent a vehicle, they are covered by their

personal insurance policy.

[Rep. Sandy Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan), who sponsors the law along with [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), said the problem is that rental companies have to carry primary insurance policies for every person that rents a car. They then pass the costs onto the consumer.

"In 43 other states, we currently hold responsibility for ourselves for the initial rental for the car. Any damages or injuries beyond the limits that are carried by the rental company," Masin said. "There is no savings currently with what is happening."

The new law, effective Aug. 1, 2007, will shift the liability from the rental company to the driver's personal automobile insurance policy, which will supply the primary liability coverage for any accident involving the driver and the rental vehicle.

[HF1712/SF744*/CH72](#)

— S. HARDING

LAW

Public defender housekeeping bill

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law that clarifies statutory public defense provisions was signed May 10 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the law changes the title of the deputy state public defender to the chief appellate public defender.

It also updates a provision stating that full-time chief district public defenders may not engage in outside law practice. There is also a repeal of a \$40 per hour reimbursement rate for public defenders.

As a result of recent Minnesota Supreme Court decisions, the law also removes public defender co-payments and the right to decline post-conviction cases.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF455*/SF300/CH61](#)

— C. GREEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County commissioner vacancies

Signed
by
the
governor

When a vacancy occurs on a county board of commissioners, there are provisions that detail how it should be filled. A new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 9, makes it easier for counties to fill the position.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the law allows for a special election to fill the position within 30 to 90 days of the vacancy; previous law called for a maximum of 60 days. It also allows a county board to appoint a new commissioner until an election is held.

Under the law, effective May 10, 2007, a special election will be held if the vacancy occurs before the first day to file affidavits for candidacy and there are more than two years left in the term.

If the vacated seat has less than two years left, the appointee will hold the position for the remainder of the term.

[HF269/SF124*/CH52](#)

— C. GREEN

Design-build authority modified

Signed
by
the
governor

In 2002, legislation was passed to give Hennepin County temporary authority to use a design-build method for the Northwest Busway and the Lowry Avenue bridge projects.

A new law signed May 14 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty modifies these provisions, removes limitations of usage and makes the law permanent.

Sponsored by [Rep. Neil Peterson](#) (R-Bloomington) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the law changes the name of “design selection committee” to the “design-build selection panel,” permits the design-build method to be used on other projects and limits the number of county design-build contracts in a year to no more than 10 percent of the county’s total projects.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law requires that a project’s primary designer have the primary design responsibility, not a consultant or subcontractor. The primary designer must also be designated in response to any request for qualifications.

[HF1708/SF1509*/CH70](#)

— C. GREEN

Protecting resorts

A bill awaiting action by the governor would protect resort owners from local ordinances that might prevent them from maintaining their buildings.

[HF849/SF961*](#), sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) and [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), would allow resort owners to conduct maintenance on existing structures and replace damaged or destroyed structures as long as their establishments continue to operate as resorts. It was amended and passed 131-0 by the House May 14 and repassed 57-0 by the Senate May 16.

The bill would allow owners to “minimally” expand their building structures when necessary to bring them into compliance with new federal, state or local buildings codes — provided that such expansions would not bring the structures any closer to a shoreline. It would also prevent a change in ownership of a resort from being construed by local governments as a conversion to a different use.

Moe said the bill would help out “small, mom-and-pop resorts.”

The bill’s language is also contained in the omnibus environment and natural resources policy bill, [HF1021/SF1131*](#), which is currently in conference committee. [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) and [Sen. Tom Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook) are the sponsors.

— N. BUSSE

MILITARY

Support Our Troops program

Eligibility requirements for grants made through the Support Our Troops license plates program could be expanded, under a bill awaiting gubernatorial action.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) and [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), [HF1157/SF1675*](#) would broaden eligibility to include military personnel, “like a soldier who is injured and returns home, but did not get to the classification of veteran,” said Haws. This would currently apply to about 40 individuals.

The bill was passed 132-0 by the House May 14 and 65-0 by the Senate April 18.

More than 13,000 [Support Our Troops](#) license plates have been purchased since they became available in 2005. Proceeds go to programs that

help military families and veterans.

The Minnesota National Guard manages the account that can grant up to \$2,000 to an eligible Minnesota resident serving in regular active military duty, and any member of a National Guard or Reserve unit based in Minnesota who is serving in any active military service, as well as a member of the service member’s immediate family.

— L. SCHUTZ

LATE ACTION

School insurance pool

A bill that would establish a mandatory health insurance pool for all school employees remained largely intact during the May 17 House floor debate, despite a rainfall of amendments.

Attempts to change the legislation mirrored efforts made in previous House committees: making the pool voluntary, appointing liability in case of insolvency and changing the makeup of the board that would design and manage the pool.

As amended it was approved 81-52 by the House. It returns to the Senate, where the original bill passed 42-23 March 28.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF464/SF276*](#) would create a 14-member board to craft a mandatory insurance pool for the approximately 200,000 school employees statewide.

The board would be required to offer six plans of varying types and establish the reserves and other means to achieve long-term stability.

Under the bill, the state would not be liable for insolvency.

“The current health care system is not working, and it certainly isn’t working in our schools,” Sertich said. “We need a new system of reform.”

DFL and Republican members alike challenged the mandatory nature of the pool, saying that a large pool isn’t necessary to reap the cost benefits.

“This doesn’t need a pool of 200,000 to work,” said [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), who unsuccessfully tried to make the pool completely voluntary, with the condition that districts could not return to the plan within six years of leaving it.

Several Republican members also expressed skepticism that the Legislature wouldn’t be liable should the plan become insolvent.

— M. SIMPSON

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

A base to reach for the stars

Aerospace program for kids gets state's attention



Fourth graders from St. Paul's Phalen Lake Elementary School learn the different parts of an airplane and other aviation facts at the Minnesota Air National Guard Base with instructor Christina Kempenich, whose call sign is "Sky."

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Tucked into the omnibus agriculture and veterans law is an appropriation for a little-known program taking place in an obscure building on the Minnesota Air National Guard Base.

Set next to the guard's plane museum, the Starbase program literally helps youth reach for the sky, the stars and maybe even the moon. With more than 2,600 young "scientists" participating each year from inner-city Minneapolis and St. Paul schools, the program gives learners a hands-on experience with the principles associated with flight and aerospace.

Once students walk through the door and under the life-size model of an astronaut that appears to be floating in space, they enter the world of aerospace and aviation. Students are known by their self-assigned "call signs" like "Black Eagle," "Tango" and "Cloud."

The [Department of Defense](#), [Minnesota National Guard](#) and some private organizations fund the program, whose mission is to give inner-city fourth- through sixth-graders a five-day experience immersed in math, science and technology. The hope is that some students will decide they like their scientist title and will choose courses leading to careers in those fields.

"It is an incredible way to dovetail on the things that kids are excited about like rockets, space and aircraft," said [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls), who serves on the Starbase board of directors. "It shows them that in order to do the really exciting things they want to do, they gotta pay attention to math and science."

Hands-on science

On a 15:1 ratio, the six instructors, dressed in flight suits, interact with their young charges making such concepts as the four forces of flight — lift, drag, thrust and weight — easily understandable, even to visiting adults suffering from science phobia. The curriculum aligns with state academic standards.

PHOTOS BY SARAH STACKE



Students prepare to go outside to look at the airplanes in the Minnesota Air National Guard Museum.

“The idea is for them to walk out of here thinking they can actually be a scientist; that they are good at science,” said Kim Van Wie, executive director of the program. “They are conducting experiments just like scientists, doing research, making observations, collecting data. Starbase helps them understand, in a very hands-on way, what science is all about.”

The program is so successful that there is a waiting list of schools wanting to participate. Van Wie said when she testified earlier this year before the House State Government Finance Division requesting \$150,000 for the pre-design work needed for expansion of the building housing the program.

“The Department of Defense said that if we could raise the funds to expand the building, they would provide the general operating support to expand the program.”

When expansion talks began, the board

of directors looked at relocating to other parts of the state, like Duluth, in an effort to reach Greater Minnesota students. Because the program is federally funded, there are some location constraints. It was decided for accessibility to students in the most academic need, it would be best to expand in the current location. Starbase statistics show that of the participating students, 86 percent are children of color; 82 percent are categorized as low-income and 40 percent are English as a Second Language students.

The appropriation request survived legislative scrutiny and the governor’s veto pen.

Measuring success

While testifying about the impact of the program on students, Van Wie happened to mention the need for a long-term study to see if students’ experience actually translates into them taking math and science coursework, and later pursuing science-related careers.

This caught the attention of [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), who successfully attached an amendment funding a \$25,000 study by the

A student, left, peeks into the back of a jet engine.

Kim Van Wie, right, executive director of Starbase.



Pa Der Lee makes a glider.



Pa Nhia Xiong, Khue Her and Mai Sheng Yang study a satellite image of Phalen Lake Elementary School, which they attend.

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation to measure Starbase graduate’s academic achievement because of participation in the program.

“It is a competitive world, and the more we can get our kids interested in math, science and engineering, the better,” said the former math teacher.

The program appears to win over even skeptics who could view it as a soft-sell approach to military recruitment.

One teacher, in her evaluation of her students’ Starbase experience, wrote: “I was apprehensive about exposing my students to the military aspect of science and math. However, I have only a positive attitude now about this program. The emphasis was not on war and weapons, but on technology and its improvement for service to others.”

Van Wie said the military is one of the careers they reference. “It is just promoted as an option, along with all the other aerospace options.”



Energy looks to the next generation

'Next Generation Energy Act' proposes a trio of aggressive reforms

By Nick Busse

A package of sweeping energy reforms aimed at curbing Minnesota's contribution to global warming, increasing energy conservation and encouraging community-based renewable energy development was passed 92-37 by the House May 11.

Sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) and Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), HF436/SF145* represents the bulk of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's "Next Generation Energy Initiative," which stresses renewable power, energy efficiency and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Titled the "Next Generation Energy Act of 2007," the bill incorporates language from three bills heard in various House committees this session. A different version was passed 55-9 by the Senate April 23, and a conference committee has been called to work out differences between the House and Senate versions.

Members from both parties praised the bill's energy conservation and community-based energy development provisions, but a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions drew fire from some members who said it could be economically damaging for the state.

Stopping global warming

Included in the bill is the "Global Warming Mitigation Act of 2007," which comes from HF375, sponsored by Rep. Maria Ruud (DFL-Minnetonka). It would establish benchmarks for reducing the state's greenhouse gas emissions to below their 2005 base levels — 15 percent by 2015, 30 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2050 — and implement a cap-and-trade system whereby power

companies would be given "allowances" of emissions that they could trade with one another.

Ruud said that an 80 percent worldwide reduction in emissions is necessary to prevent the world from crossing a "dangerous threshold" for climate change.

"We know that if we don't do that, what the science says is that we will reach a tipping point," she said.

Under the bill, utility companies would be forbidden from constructing new power plants that would produce a net increase in carbon dioxide emissions. Citing a rapidly increasing demand for electricity, Rep. Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) said this would put the state at risk for power outages.

"We need new generation — certainly along with the renewable energy standards, certainly along with conservation. They're all important. But we need new generation," Sviggum said.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) said the provision could result in a jump in the price of electricity by as much as a third — a possibility that he said would be economically disastrous, particularly to communities in Greater Minnesota. His amendment to delete this section of the bill failed 78-50.

Dismissing the claims of "global warming fanatics," Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Delano)

attacked the underlying premise of Ruud's legislation: that global warming poses an imminent threat. He argued that there is a lack of scientific consensus on the issue, and that "the empirical evidence does not support" the idea of human-caused global warming.

Rep. Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton) challenged Emmer's view, citing a recent report from an international scientific organization that states with "90 percent certainty" that climate change is real and that humans are the cause. She said the state needs to take steps to prepare for the economic changes that climate change will entail.

"Tonight we have an opportunity to take control of the changes we're going to see in the world — not full control, but partial control," said Knuth.

Efficiency and conservation

Originally included in HF1221, sponsored by Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-Lindstrom), the conservation portion of the bill aims to save Minnesotans money while reducing the environmental impacts of energy consumption. Kalin said the bill contains a five-part conservation and efficiency strategy:

- establishing a statewide energy conservation goal of 1.5 percent of annual retail electric and gas sales;
- expanding and improving the state's conservation improvement program;
- providing research and development and technical assistance to utility companies through the Department of Commerce;
- increasing energy efficiency in state buildings; and
- removing financial disincentives for utility companies to promote energy conservation.

"The core principle of the energy efficiency article in this bill is something I think we all agree on, and that's eliminating waste," Kalin said.

Energy continued on page 20

State drinking water gets dirty

Residents in one Minnesota city use bottled water for laundry

By SONJA HEGMAN

Many small communities across the state are left to wonder whether they will ever be in a financial position to make the needed upgrades to their wastewater treatment plants. The sales tax exemptions provided for several communities in the original House omnibus tax bill would have helped cut the cost, but only one exemption survived in the re-crafted omnibus tax bill passed by the Senate and House on May 16. The only exemption in the bill is for the city of Minnetonka.

The city of Harris was one of 14 communities that would have benefited from a sales tax exemption for a new wastewater treatment plant. While most cities requested a 50 percent exemption, Harris would have received a full sales tax exemption.

The Chisago County city has 126 hookups on its current wastewater system. And some Harris residents have to buy bottled water to do their laundry, because 25 percent of their sewage leaks into the groundwater per day.

"The city of Harris is unique in that we have 1,250 people in our community, but only 300 people on our system," Mayor Richard Smisson said.

Seventy percent of system users are below the poverty level, while other residents use wells and septic systems instead of the city's water system. It's nearly impossible for the city to grow, Smisson said, because the [Pollution Control Agency](#) condemned the system a few years ago because of the leaking sewage and additional hookups are not allowed. "So we can't grow to pay for anything, but at the same time we have to solve the problem," he said.

The sales tax exemption would have helped cut the cost of the new system. It would have been applied to, among other things, construction materials and equipment. The tax would have been paid at the time of purchase and the city could have applied for a refund.

With a new system, Harris and other cities, have to be conscious of phosphorus levels,



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

St. Croix Valley Wastewater Treatment Plant in Oak Park Heights.

which Smisson said would force them to install a more expensive system. The city's drinking water has been tested, and it is above the legal limits for radium which occurs naturally in the city's aquifer. So the city has been ordered to build a water treatment plant, as well.

"We're now grappling with how to attract businesses and developers into the community to pay for this once we do get the systems online," Smisson said. Harris hasn't received any federal money for the project, although it did receive \$500,000 from a [Department of Health](#) grant for the water treatment plant, but has not received money for a sewer system.

"This has been a very difficult situation in an area that serves only the oldest part of the community," said [Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti), who sponsored [HF1960](#) for the treatment plant.

Once the plant is complete, all new development would go on the new system, he said.

Harris is not unique in its wastewater woes. [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) said that some of the cities in need of these plants have only 100-200 residents and they are being forced to build multi-million dollar facilities.

"This is just a huge issue," he said. "And they have to do it, but they also need the help. ... It would be nice to put in a budget and just do it automatically."

New York Mills, in western Minnesota, would have received a 50 percent sales tax exemption.

"As you can see, this is a statewide issue," said [Rep. Dean Simpson](#) (R-Perham), who sponsors [HF2103](#) for the city of 1,200.

The New York Mills exemption would have saved about \$120,000 to \$130,000, Simpson said. "In a community that size, it will buy patrol cars for them for the next 15 years because they buy one and use it for four or five years."

A study showed that a very high percentage of water treatment plants in western Minnesota are failing, Simpson said. Most of those plants were put in after World War II. The federal government previously played an important part in financing treatment facilities, but he said federal money isn't put into local projects like it used to be. New York Mills has been working on its project in some form since the late-1990s, and the cost has increased from

Water continued on page 20

Lake Superior agates. Common loons. Pink and white lady-slippers and Norway pines. Walleyes and wild rice. All are characteristic of Minnesota, and all capture the essence of the state. Over the course of Minnesota's statehood, the Legislature has adopted 15 such symbols to identify the state.

The State Seal

The Great Seal of Minnesota has been around for more than 140 years.

It was on May 25, 1858 — two weeks after Minnesota became a state — that then Secretary of State Francis Baasen said to Gov. Henry H. Sibley that, “My office being without a seal, I can of course do no official act unless you make some direction in the matter.”

Sibley immediately authorized the use of the territorial seal until a new design could be created and agreed upon. That seal, essentially the same one in use today, was used while the Legislature debated a new one.

In 1858, the Legislature approved a vastly different seal, but for some reason it was never officially adopted into law that year. Historians still aren't sure why, but speculation has it that Sibley didn't like the design and conveniently “lost” the bill in favor of the territorial design. In any case, the Legislature, in 1861, when notified that the governor may have acted outside his authority, approved the design and it was signed into law. ▼

The State Bird

The Legislature adopted the common loon as the state bird in 1961.

The sleek-looking bird can attain speeds of up to 60 mph and can travel great distances under water. The loon's legs are near the rear of its body, enabling it to dive under water quickly, quietly, and with great speed.

The loon earned its name from the old English word “lumme,” meaning awkward person. The loon ventures on land only when nesting and breeding. And even then, the nest is always very close to water.

Loons are loners and prefer Minnesota's isolated lakes, leading some to label their distinctive call as “the loneliest voice on earth.” ▼

The State Flower

It was in 1893 that a group of women preparing an exhibit of the state's products for the World's Fair in Chicago decided they should have a state flower to decorate their display. They petitioned legislators to adopt the wild lady's slipper as the state flower, and the Legislature complied. But several years later, officials discovered that the *wild* lady's slipper named in law didn't grow in Minnesota.

So, during the 1902 special session of the Legislature, a new resolution was adopted that changed the state flower to the pink and white lady's slipper.

Under the right conditions, lady's slippers can live for more than 100 years. The pink and white lady's slipper can grow to a height of 3 feet and is the tallest of the state's lady's slippers. ▼

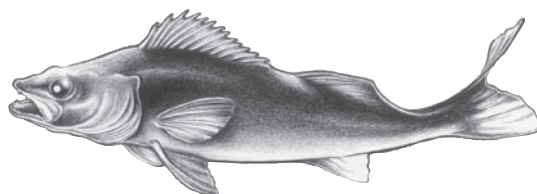


The State Fish

Of all Minnesota's state symbols, none is more eagerly sought after than the walleye — the official state fish.

In May 1965, the Minnesota Legislature adopted the walleye as the state fish. It was chosen for its value to both sport and commercial fishing.

The walleye gets its name from its eyes, which have a milky appearance like bluish-white marbles. But it's known by a variety of other names, too — yellow pike, yellow perchpike and yellow pickerel. ▼



The State Gemstone

The Legislature adopted the Lake Superior agate as the official state gemstone in 1969. Found mainly along the north and south shores of Lake Superior, the stone's red color comes from iron, the major industrial mineral in the state. The concentration of iron, and the extent to which the iron has oxidized, determines the color of the stone. Puddles of quartz-rich solutions that crystallized inside the gas pocket under low fluid pressure caused the white bands that are typically found in agates. ▼

The State Mushroom

The *morchella esculenta*, commonly known as the morel, sponge mushroom or honeycomb morel, became Minnesota's official state mushroom in 1984.

The morel's cups resemble cone-shaped sponges, pitted like a honeycomb. The morel is usually 4 inches to 8 inches high.

It grows from early May to early June in the Twin Cities metropolitan area among leaves or wood ashes in open woods, along roadsides, and in partially shaded meadowland.

The morel is considered one of the most highly prized and delicious of all edible mushrooms. ▼

The State Flag

The Minnesota state flag was adopted by the state Legislature in 1893 when it accepted the design submitted by Amelia Hyde Center of Minneapolis. The seal shows a pioneer plowing the virgin prairie and an Indian on horseback. At the top of the seal is the state motto, “L'Etoile du Nord,” or “star of the north.” Three dates on the flag signify the establishment of historic Fort Snelling in 1819, the acceptance of Minne-

sota as a state in 1858 and the adoption of the state flag in 1893.

The 19 stars on the flag symbolize Minnesota as the 19th state to be admitted to the Union after the original 13. The largest of these stars is centered above the seal to symbolize the north star state.

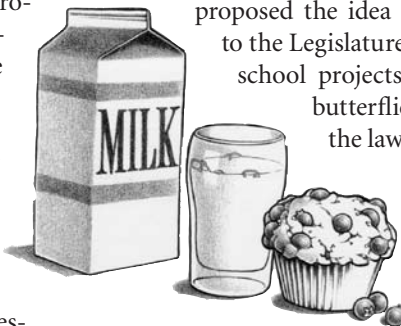
The original flag had two sides, blue on one side and white on the other. But because the flag was so expensive to make, and because it was easily damaged in high winds, the Legislature adopted the one-sided, all-blue design in 1957. ▼

The State Muffin

In an exercise to see how a bill becomes law, a class of third-graders from Carlton, Minn., proposed that the blueberry muffin be designated as the state muffin.

In 1988, their bill was signed into law. The idea for the blueberry muffin bill arose in a social studies class when the third graders were studying the state's symbols.

They asked themselves a question: If Minnesota were to have a state food, what would it be? The answer they gave was the blueberry muffin. They reasoned that wild blueberries are plentiful and popular in northern Minnesota, and farmers from across the state grow wheat. ▼



The State Drink

In 1984, the Legislature designated milk as the official state drink. Why? For starters, there are many more dairy cows than lakes in the state.

The top three counties in Minnesota for milk production in 2005 were Stearns with 1.15 billion pounds, Morrison with 479 million pounds and Winona with 478 million pounds. One gallon of milk weighs 8.6 pounds.

In 2005 Minnesota farmers marketed nearly \$1.25 billion in milk. ▼

The State Grain

For centuries, wild rice has been a staple for the Indians of northern Minnesota. To recognize that, and the fact that Minnesota is a leading producer of natural wild rice in the nation, the state Legislature adopted wild rice as the

official state grain in 1977.

Wild rice, which is really a grain, grows naturally in the many lakes and rivers in the northern half of the state.

The Ojibway word for rice is "manomin," whose root word is "mano," or spirit. The rice was traditionally harvested by women in late August and early September. ▼

The State Butterfly

The Monarch butterfly was named the state butterfly by the Legislature in 2000.

Fourth-graders from O.H. Anderson Elementary School in Mahtomedi, Minn., proposed the idea for the state butterfly to the Legislature while combining two school projects — studying various butterflies and learning about the lawmaking process.

The Monarch is one of six popular families of butterflies in Minnesota. Distinguished by their distinctive orange-brown wings, marked by black veins and a black border with two rows of spots, Monarchs cannot stand the cold winters here and will migrate south to Mexico every fall. August is the best month to see Monarchs in Minnesota. ▼



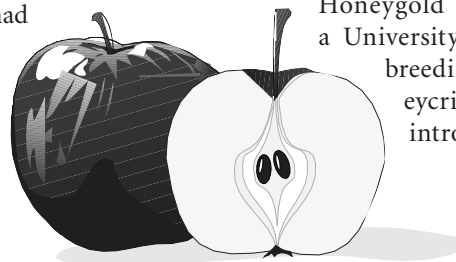
The State Song

The song, "Hail! Minnesota," has been the state song since 1945.

The song dates back to 1904, when it was sung in a University of Minnesota play, "The Apple of Discord, a Travesty," a comedy about a football game.

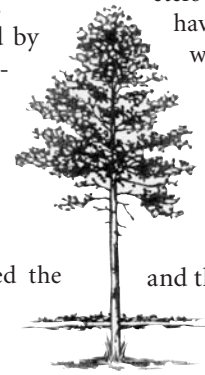
The song was originally written by student Truman E. Rickard, then later rewritten by another student, Arthur Upson.

In 1945, the university gave permission to the state to use the song, as did Rickard (Upson had died). Then the words were changed slightly from "Hail to thee our college dear," to "Hail to thee our state so dear." ▼



The State Tree

In 1953, Minnesota adopted the Norway pine as the state tree. Norway pines typically reach heights of 80 feet and diameters of up to 3 feet; exceptional trees have grown as high as 150 feet and as wide as 5 feet.



The largest Norway pine in Minnesota is in Itasca State Park. The tree is over 120 feet tall and is more than 300 years old. It's called a red pine because of the pale red color of its heartwood and the reddish color of its bark. ▼

The State Photograph

A world-renowned photograph became the state's 14th state symbol.

Shot in Bovey, Minn., by Eric Enstrom in 1918, "Grace" features an elderly man sitting pensively with his head bowed and hands folded. He is leaning over a table, and on the table is a pair of spectacles resting atop a thick book, a bowl of gruel, a loaf of bread and a knife.

A copy of the state photograph is displayed in the Office of the Secretary of State in St. Paul.

Enstrom shot the photograph in black and white, but as "Grace" became more popular Enstrom's daughter, Rhoda Nyberg, began hand painting the prints in oil. ▼

The State Fruit

An assignment to write a persuasive letter ultimately led to the Honeycrisp apple to be deemed the state fruit in 2006.

The fourth-grade students from Andersen Elementary School in Bayport, Minn., who initiated the idea, were present in the House gallery for the bill's passage.

The Honeycrisp apple was produced from a 1960 cross of the Macoun and Honeygold varieties, as part of a University of Minnesota apple breeding program. The Honeycrisp apple was formally introduced in 1991. ▼

and the inclusion of graduate students; the elimination of a construction code fee to help fund construction management programs at three schools; an additional \$800,000 for a College in the Schools program; and it provides fewer funds for an Achieve Scholarship Program, and limits eligibility to students receiving free and reduced price meals who take rigorous high school classes.

Pappas said the bill still strives to keep tuition increases at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to less than 4 percent each year, as proposed by system leaders. It also anticipates the University of Minnesota keeping tuition increases at less than 4.5 percent annually.

State Government

A last ditch effort to revive the omnibus state government finance bill resulted in an amended version being passed 42-22 by the Senate. The House has yet to take it up.

Sponsored by **Sen. Don Betzold** (DFL-Fridley), **HF548** would appropriate \$551.8 million for state agency funding, staffing, operations and some special projects. The governor recommended \$613.3 million.

Although not happy with everything in the latest bill, **Rep. Phyllis Kahn** (DFL-Mpls), who sponsored the original House version, said it is signable. "I would think it would be very hard for the governor to object to anything we have done in that bill. We went through his veto message line-by-line and addressed many of his concerns."

Contentious items not included in the latest bill are all elections provisions, including one that would have eased voter registration by automatically registering those who apply for a driver's license. Another removed provision would have directed state employee collective bargaining agreements to offer health insurance to domestic partners if the same were offered to spouses of state employees.

Areas that got a boost in priority included technology investments for better Internet security and more monies for an integrated tax system for the **Department of Revenue**, that would help in the department's expected increase in tax compliance monies, of which the bill assumes a \$104.4 million for the 2008-09 biennium.

Under the bill, the governor is instructed to reduce the number of deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and unclassified positions to total \$7.3 million by June 30, 2009, and another equivalent total by June 30, 2011.

Taxes

The Senate voted 40-24 May 16 for a less expensive tax bill that would provide modest property tax relief, mainly by boosting state aid to local governments. The House has yet to take up the measure.

HF2268*/SF1933, sponsored by **Rep. Ann Lenczewski** (DFL-Bloomington) and **Sen. Tom Bakk** (DFL-Cook), would not increase income taxes, business property taxes or other major revenue sources. Most of the money to pay for that tax break would come from closing corporate tax loopholes for companies that shelter income through foreign operating corporations. The original House omnibus tax bill, yet to be acted upon, would have provided \$452 million in property tax relief with an income tax increase on the state's wealthiest residents.

"They said property tax reform was their number one thing and it's the first thing they throw under the bus," Pawlenty said at a May 16 press conference.

The new tax bill came a day after the governor vetoed **HF2294*/SF2003**, sponsored by **Rep. David Dill** (DFL-Crane Lake) and Bakk, which would have created a new income tax bracket for the state's top earners. As amended to become the omnibus property tax bill, it was passed 35-31 by the Senate and **73-58** by the House.

"The governor vetoed property tax relief on the day people have to pay the first half of their property taxes," **Rep. Paul Marquart** (DFL-Dilworth) said. "That just added insult to injury."

Transportation

Vetoed by Pawlenty May 15 was a \$4.23 billion bill (**HF946**) that included permission for counties to increase their sales tax by 0.5 percent for transportation needs, a formula for dedicating motor vehicle sales tax revenue, \$1.5 billion in trunk highway bonding in the next decade, a \$20 excise tax on motor vehicles and up to a 7.5-cent increase in the state's gas tax. The latter includes a 2.5-cent bump to pay for bonding debt service.

"With more than \$5 billion in tax and fee increases, this bill would impose an unnecessary and onerous financial burden on Minnesota citizens and would weaken our state's economy," Pawlenty wrote in his veto message. "The entire array of tax increases in this bill would cost an average family in Minnesota up to \$500 per year."

Because the conference committee report was approved **90-43** in the House and **47-17** in the Senate, there have been rumblings about an attempted veto override. **Rep. Bernie Lieder** (DFL-Crookston), the House sponsor, said May 16 that an override attempt "may happen in a couple of days." To be successful, the bill would need 90 "yes" votes in the House and 45 in the Senate. However, Lieder indicated another vote or two may be needed because some who previously voted affirmatively would not support the override attempt. If an override fails a so-called "lights-on" bill could be offered.


— **MIKE COOK, STEPHEN HARDING, SONJA HEGMAN, PATTY OSTBERG, LEE ANN SCHUTZ AND MIA SIMPSON CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE.**

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Community energy development

The bill would overhaul the state's Community-Based Energy Development statutes by expanding the types of projects that would qualify for the program, increasing the financial benefits for communities that invest in renewable power, and encouraging utilities to make use of C-BED projects in meeting the state's renewable energy standard.

The C-BED provisions, which come from **HF2253**, sponsored by **Rep. Aaron Peterson** (DFL-Appleton), also require utilities to offer their customers the option of purchasing some or all of their energy from C-BED projects.

"You'll have the opportunity to purchase 100 percent Minnesota renewable energy," Peterson said, adding that the program will feature its own logo similar to the "Minnesota Grown" logo for locally produced foods. 


Water continued from page 17

\$2.1 million to \$3.7 million.

Jennifer O'Rourke, an intergovernmental relations representative with the League of Minnesota Cities, said that over the next five years, \$1.9 billion is the projected need for wastewater/water treatment plant projects statewide. The 10-year projected need is \$3.2 billion because of a federal mandate on wastewater cleanup.

"I see this area as an ever-expanding area," said **Rep. Sandy Wollschlager** (DFL-Cannon Falls). "At what point are we going to get our arms around this?"

Simpson said that as technology changes, he thinks the state will change with it.

"I'd like to see us get to point where we don't have to put in these huge systems for all these communities," he said. 

Tracking new laws, vetoes

Once a bill passes the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the governor for consideration. The governor has several options when considering a bill:

- sign the bill and it will become law;
- veto the bill;
- line-item veto individual items within an appropriations bill; or
- do nothing, which can have two different effects. The timing of these actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In the first year of the biennium, the governor has three days from the time of presentment to veto a bill. If the governor doesn't sign the bill within this time frame,

it will become law with or without his signature. (Sundays are not counted in the three-day time limit, but holidays are.)

Only on appropriations bills can the governor exercise the line-item veto authority. This allows the governor to eliminate the appropriation items to which he or she objects. As with all vetoes (save pocket vetoes, which occur in the days after the Legislature has adjourned sine die), the governor must include a statement listing the reasons for the veto with the returned bill. Here, too, the timetable is three days after the governor receives the bill.

Policy items contained in appropriations bills may not be line-item vetoed. In order

to veto such an item, the governor is required to veto the entire bill.

A two-thirds vote of the members in each house is needed to override a veto. But because only the governor can call a special session of the Legislature, anything vetoed after the Legislature adjourns is history — at least until the next session.

The governor's veto authority is outlined in the Minnesota Constitution (Article IV, Section 23).

Key: CH=Chapter; HF=House File; SF=Senate File; *=denotes bill language signed into law.

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 8* | 17 | Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006. | 1/30/2007 | |
| 2 | 110* | 38 | Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact enacted. | 2/20/2007 | |
| 3 | 4 | 4* | Renewable energy standard established. | 2/22/2007 | |
| 4 | 87* | 257 | St. Paul Asian Pacific Cultural Center predesign expenditures authorized. | 3/2/2007 | |
| 5 | 160* | 103 | Help America Vote Act account appropriations transfer authorized. | 3/14/2007 | |
| 6 | 935 | 736* | Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed Minnesota Inter-county Association. | 3/21/2007 | |
| 7 | 1425 | 1499* | Students authorized to participate in high school league-sponsored activities after completing licensed treatment programs. | 3/20/2007 | |
| 8 | 1008* | 985 | Child placement background check requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 9 | 1364 | 1168* | Building contractors insurance requirements modified. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 10 | 1678 | 1294* | Public Utilities Commission electronic filing authorized. | 3/27/2007 | |
| 11 | 736* | 636 | Ambulance service personnel longevity award and incentive program renamed the Cooper/Sams volunteer ambulance program. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 12 | 1441* | 792 | Limited purpose trust companies nonsubstantive term changes provided. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 13 | 1200* | 983 | Revisor's bill. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 14 | 163 | 60* | Duluth postemployment benefits accounts authorized, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 15 | 1429 | 1332* | Meeker County economic development authority membership increased to nine. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 16 | 274* | 227 | Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated. | 3/30/2007 | |
| 17 | 1432 | 1133* | St. Louis County civil service director provisions modified. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 18 | 1004* | 809 | Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 19 | 878* | 1263 | Board of Animal Health consultants expanded to include the commissioner of agriculture. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 20 | 472* | 239 | Renewable energy production incentives eligibility period extended. | 4/20/2007 | |
| 21 | 1594* | 952 | National Guard reenlistment bonus program expanded, and academic awards provided. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 22 | 448* | 1912 | Auto insurance verification mailing program repealed. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 23 | 539* | 600 | Trunk highway Route No. 145 technical correction provided, and Legislative Route No. 262 removed. | 4/26/2007 | |
| 24 | 2090* | 2111 | Backflow prevention in recreational camping areas requirements limited. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 25 | 1490* | 1419 | Scott County personnel rules adoption authorized, and veterans' preference administration provided. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 26 | 1193 | 1098* | Beltrami County; county recorder appointment process provided. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 27 | 1105 | 1017* | Charter commission expense limitations increased for specified cities. | | 4/30/2007 |
| 28 | 1300 | 1069* | Motor fuels unavailability notice required, and penalty waiver provided for retailers who do not carry ethanol or biodiesel blends under certain circumstances. | 4/30/2007 | |
| 29 | 2135 | 1949* | Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission duties, powers, and procedures modified. | 5/3/2007 | |

*The legislative bill marked with an asterisk denotes the file submitted to the governor.

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|--|-----------|----------|
| 30 | 293* | 450 | Environment and natural resources funding provided, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources meeting requirements modified. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 31 | 881* | 981 | Metropolitan Land Planning act and related statutes modified, and erroneous and obsolete references corrected. | | 5/3/2007 |
| 32 | 958 | 846* | State agencies deficiency funding provided, and money appropriated. | 5/2/2007 | |
| 33 | 1294 | 1483* | Minnesota Council on Disability sunset repealed. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 34 | 1872 | 1807* | Hennepin County conflicts of interest regulated for certain Hennepin Healthcare System personnel. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 35 | 1267 | 1236* | State employees technical and housekeeping changes provided. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 36 | 1016 | 420* | Forest pest control measures provided, approved firewood required on land administered by the commissioner of natural resources, and sale and distribution of firewood regulated. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 37 | 1444 | 1105* | Health risk limits and reporting required for certain perfluorochemicals. | 5/3/2007 | |
| 38 | 886* | 2157 | Omnibus bonding bill providing capital improvements funding, issuing bonds, and appropriating money. | | 5/1/2007 |
| 39 | 1865 | 1787* | Workers' compensation coverage federal exclusions information and report required. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 40 | 993 | 1735* | Radon control provisions adoption required relating to building codes. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 41 | 1990 | 1790* | Adverse health care events reporting provisions modified. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 42 | 1442 | 1266* | Hospital emergency rooms required to provide emergency contraception, prophylactic antibiotics and information to sexual assault victims. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 43 | 465 | 321* | Independent nonprofit firefighting corporations included for joint exercise of powers agreements. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 44 | 2056 | 1920* | Financial institutions debt, charges, expenses, electronic terminals, and investments regulated. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 45 | 2227* | 1925 | Omnibus agricultural and veterans affairs bill appropriating money; providing for NextGen energy; and changing veterans provisions. | 5/4/2007 | |
| 46 | 966* | 817 | State nurse overtime provisions modified, and report required. | 5/8/2007 | |
| 47 | 189 | 372* | Ticket scalping prohibition repealed. | 5/7/2007 | |
| 48 | 854* | 235 | Video display device collection, transportation, and recycling provided; civil penalties imposed. | 5/8/2007 | |
| 49 | 1400 | 358* | Adoption information assistance provided to genetic siblings. | 5/8/2007 | |
| 50 | 918 | 555* | Essential community provider designation extended. | 5/8/2007 | |
| 51 | 272* | 699 | Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service. | 5/9/2007 | |
| 52 | 269 | 124* | County office vacancy procedures modified. | 5/9/2007 | |
| 53 | 504 | 646* | Bullying; school board policies prohibiting bullying and intimidation required to address electronic and Internet use. | 5/9/2007 | |
| 54 | 829* | 650 | Omnibus public safety and corrections finance bill appropriating money; providing general criminal and sentencing provisions; and regulating DWI and driving provisions. | 5/7/2007 | |
| 55 | None | 2089* | Omnibus jobs and economic development bill providing accounts, assessments, fees, and funding; modifying certain programs; regulating certain activities and practices. | | 5/7/2007 |
| 56 | 953 | 1997* | State government funding provided, state and local operations regulated, public employment provisions modified, Department of Employee Relations abolished. | | 5/7/2007 |
| 57 | 2410 | 2096* | Omnibus environment and natural resources finance bill appropriating money for environment, natural resources, and energy purposes. | 5/8/2007 | |
| 58 | 297 | 2171* | Omnibus health and human services finance bill. | | 5/8/2007 |
| 59 | 905 | 1311* | Municipal preventive health services programs authorized. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 60 | 633 | 805* | Health plan coverage for hearing aids requirements modified. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 61 | 455* | 300 | Public defense provisions updated and clarified, right to representation modified, public defender system supervision provided, chief public appellate defender appointment provided, and public defender co-payments statutory language stricken. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 62 | 2045 | 1193* | Petroleum products specifications updated, and petroleum definitions modified. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 63 | 1598 | 1073* | State labor agreements and compensation plans ratified. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 64 | 556 | 218* | Airport zoning disclosure duties established. | 5/10/2007 | |
| 65 | 797 | 1989* | Omnibus higher education funding bill. | | 5/9/2007 |
| 66 | 1287 | 1705* | Colorectal screening tests insurance coverage required. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 67 | 1493 | 2030* | Surplus property rulemaking authority provided. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 68 | 1555 | 1902* | Energy forward pricing mechanisms terms defined. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 69 | 738 | 322* | Civil commitment early intervention services expanded, and definition of chemically dependent person expanded. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 70 | 1708 | 1509* | Hennepin County design-build contract provisions modified. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 71 | 1704 | 1464* | Motor vehicle collision repair required to include air bag repair or replacement, and criminal penalties imposed. | 5/15/2007 | |
| 72 | 1712 | 744* | Rental vehicle insurance coverage regulated. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 73 | 1919 | 2161* | Plats of land provided. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 74 | 931 | 988* | Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited, criminal penalties prescribed, and remedies provided. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 75 | 756 | 585* | National Register of Historic Places property sale or lease restrictions removed. | 5/15/2007 | |
| 76 | 1339 | 1557* | State government record retention provision deleted. | 5/14/2007 | |
| 77 | 1034 | 538* | Heating and cooling policy established for building projects funded with state appropriations. | | |
| 78 | 1161 | 1045* | Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority renamed Scott County Community Development Agency. | | |

| CH | HF | SF | Description | Signed | Vetoed |
|----|-------|-------|---|--------|-----------|
| 79 | 772 | 608* | Aircraft insurance minimum liability limits increased. | | |
| 80 | 1949 | 1542* | Insurer conduct regulated in collision cases. | | |
| 81 | 2294* | 2003 | Omnibus tax bill modifying property tax provisions, providing a homestead credit state refund, increasing property tax refunds, providing a school bond agricultural credit, and adding an income tax bracket and rate. | | 5/15/2007 |
| 82 | 305 | 238* | Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007; secondhand smoke hazard public policy established to protect employees and the general public. | | |
| 83 | 1486 | 1755* | Charitable organizations authorized to participate in joint powers agreements. | | |
| 84 | 946* | 1986 | Omnibus transportation finance bill appropriating money for transportation, Metropolitan Council, and public safety activities; issuing bonds; modifying taxes; authorizing local transportation sales taxes. | | 5/15/2007 |
| 85 | 1582 | 1215* | Health department technical changes provided, radioactive material license renewal fee eliminated, radiation-producing equipment fees established, x-ray equipment operation requirements modified. | | |
| 86 | 1157 | 1675* | Minnesota "Support Our Troops" account money uses expanded. | | |
| 87 | 1554 | 1495* | Payroll card accounts regulation extended. | | |
| 88 | 1549 | 1019* | Public Utilities Commission ex parte rules technical changes provided. | | |
| 89 | 1958 | 1070* | Liquor regulations modified, and intoxicating liquor licenses authorized. | | |

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

MAY 11 - 17, 2007
HOUSE FILES 2476 - 2502

Friday, May 11

HF2476-Simpson (R)

Finance

Wadena Regional Wellness Center funding provided.

HF2477-Ruud (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Colorectal cancer screening for the uninsured provided.

HF2478-Pelowski (DFL)

Finance

Port development assistance funding provided.

Monday, May 14

HF2479-Olin (DFL)

Rules & Legislative Administration

Fiduciary transactions technical correction provided.

HF2480-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Kandiyohi County veterans facility funding established.

HF2481-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Como Zoo infrastructure funding provided.

HF2482-Lanning (R)

Finance

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District flood hazard mitigation funding provided.

HF2483-Johnson (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul Youth Services building acquisition and renovation funding provided.

HF2484-Welti (DFL)

Finance

Rochester Community and Technical College addition funding provided.

HF2485-Johnson (DFL)

Finance

St. Paul; National Great River Park including the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, improvements and infrastructure provided.

Tuesday, May 15

HF2486-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Evidence-based underwriting standards based upon life insurance applicants having received mental health care prior approval required.

HF2487-Solberg (DFL)

Finance

McGregor wastewater discharge re-routing system funding provided.

HF2488-Westrom (R)

Finance

Independent School District No. 264, Herman-Norcross, fisheries and wildlife management technology curriculum grant provided.

HF2489-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Invalid medical assistance liens attorney fees provided.

Wednesday, May 16

HF2490-Gunther (R)

Rules & Legislative Administration

Compensation Council provided the authority to establish salaries for legislators, judges and constitutional officers.

HF2491-Koenen (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Power of attorney alternative statutory short form created for military members who are in active service.

Thursday, May 17

HF2492-Severson (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Veterans Outdoor Reintegration Act of 2008 adopted providing lifetime hunting and fishing licenses to eligible veterans without fees.

HF2493-Clark (DFL)

Finance

Sober houses regulated.

HF2494-Severson (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Child custody; courts prohibited from considering a parent's military status when determining child custody or parenting time orders.

HF2495-Kranz (DFL)

Finance

Ice arena facilities funding provided to the amateur sports commission.

HF2496-Koenen (DFL)

Finance

Yellow Medicine County Agriculture and Transportation Museum electrical system upgrade funding provided.

HF2497-Eken (DFL)

Rules & Legislative Administration

Legislators Salary Council established, Citizen Compensation Council composition modified and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2498-Sailer (DFL)

Finance

Hubbard County historic courthouse building renovation funding provided.

HF2499-Atkins (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Telecommunications services for business customers uniform regulatory treatment provided.

HF2500-Buesgens (R)

Taxes

Gasoline and special fuel tax temporary suspension provided.

HF2501-Jaros (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Mourning dove hunting prohibited.

HF2502-Haws (DFL)

Taxes

St. Cloud police and fire stations construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER
MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH
MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Educating the state

| | |
|--|----------|
| Minnesota K-12 education total expenditures 2006-07, in billions..... | \$14.6 |
| Per pupil spending in Minnesota in 2005-06 school year..... | \$9,675 |
| National rank | 18 |
| State aid per pupil in 2005-06 school year..... | \$8,368 |
| National rank..... | 3 |
| Public school districts in Minnesota in 2005-06 school year | 339 |
| Number of public schools | 1,895 |
| Private schools | 510 |
| Charter schools..... | 136 |
| Teachers in Minnesota in 2005 | 52,255 |
| Those who teach special education..... | 8,752 |
| Average years of teaching experience..... | 14.09 |
| Average teacher salary in Minnesota in 2005..... | \$48,489 |
| National rank..... | 16 |
| National average..... | \$49,109 |
| K-12 enrollment in Minnesota public schools on Oct. 1, 2005..... | 828,364 |
| Kindergarten | 59,806 |
| Grades 1-6..... | 357,025 |
| Grades 7-12 | 411,533 |
| Private school enrollment on Oct. 1, 2005..... | 83,909 |
| Students open enrolled to nonresident districts..... | 35,731 |
| Students in charter schools in 2005-06 year | 20,608 |
| Home schooled Minnesota students in 2005 | 17,334 |
| Pupils per teacher in 2005-06 year | 16 |
| National rank..... | 15 |
| Percentage of state residents age 25 and older with a high school diploma in 2005..... | 92.7 |
| National rank..... | 1 |
| Increase in graduation rate from 1989-2004, as percent..... | 8 |
| Graduation rate in 2004, as percent..... | 92.3 |
| National rank..... | 1 |
| Dropout rate in 2005-06, as percent..... | 3.8 |

— S. HARDING

Sources: **Department of Education; State Rankings 2007; CQ State Fact Finder 2007; State Trends third edition; U.S. Department of Education; Minnesota House Fiscal Analysis Department.**

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SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 21 • JUNE 1, 2007

A CLIFF-HANGER TO THE END
4,915 BILLS, 150 NEW LAWS
COUNTING EVERYBODY

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

HF2503 - HF2552

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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On the cover: The last days of session provide a flurry of activity outside the House Chamber, as seen in a multiple time-exposure image.

—Photo by: Andrew VonBank



A cliff-hanger to the end

Drama and suspense mark the closing of the 2007 session

By Nick Busse

When [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) dropped the final gavel on the 2007 legislative session at midnight on May 21, one thing was clear: it hadn't been a pretty ending.

Unfortunately, not much else was clear.

For the first time in eight years, legislators had finished the state budget on time — albeit not without Democrats using a series of unusual procedural maneuvers on the House floor, effectively silencing the Republican minority long enough to pass the last remaining budget bills before deadline.

Cliff-hanger continued on page 4

2008-09 Biennial State Budget

General Fund Spending (\$ in millions)

| Category | Governor | House | Senate | Final |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Property Tax Aids, Credits | \$3,207 | \$3,648 | \$3,570 | \$3,233 |
| E-12 Education | \$13,716 | \$13,806 | \$13,833 | \$13,790 |
| Higher Education | \$3,203 | \$3,206 | \$3,221 | \$3,152 |
| Health and Human Services | \$9,540 | \$9,879 | \$9,797 | \$9,725 |
| Environment, Energy and Natural Resources | \$422 | \$431 | \$411 | \$440 |
| Agriculture and Veterans | \$175 | \$175 | \$167 | \$180 |
| Economic Development | \$324 | \$370 | \$376 | \$340 |
| Transportation | \$398 | \$244 | \$300 | \$251 |
| Public Safety | \$1,878 | \$1,890 | \$1,876 | \$1,877 |
| State Government | \$606 | \$544 | \$541 | \$656 |
| Debt Service | \$913 | \$1,039 | \$1,069 | \$906 |
| Miscellaneous | \$148 | \$126 | \$134 | \$130 |
| Total | \$34,530 | \$35,358 | \$35,295 | \$34,680 |
| Percent Increase from 2006-07 | 9.8% | 12.8% | 11.9% | 10.1% |

Source: Department of Finance

But even after the dramatic final hours in the House Chamber, it wasn't immediately clear whether Gov. Tim Pawlenty would sign off on the approximately \$35 billion budget legislators were proposing. The governor's veto pen had already axed most of the DFL's original budget proposals, and a series of behind-closed-doors negotiations between Pawlenty and legislative leaders had yielded no final, rock-solid budget agreement. The threat of a special session loomed.

Adding to the suspense, DFL leadership made the unusual move of waiting to present the governor with the last four bills until after Memorial Day weekend — more than a week after they were passed. Kelliher said she wanted to give Pawlenty adequate time to complete his work, but some speculated the move was intended to allow time for pressure to be put on the governor to sign the tax bill, which he had threatened to veto.

The suspense ended May 30 when Pawlenty signed the necessary spending bills — after trimming them down with a series of line-item vetoes.

The tax bill, however, didn't survive the process. Angered over the last-minute insertion of a provision that would have required state budget forecasts to include inflationary increases, Pawlenty vetoed the bill, putting the kyboshes on \$75 million in local government aid, \$33 million in property

tax refunds and subsidies for a Mall of America expansion and other local projects.

By the end of session, Pawlenty had torpedoed many DFL proposals, including one that sought to provide more than \$450 million in property tax relief by raising income taxes on the wealthiest Minnesotans. Other legislation that ended up on the cutting room floor this year included a 10-cent gas tax increase to pay for transportation improvements

(later lowered to 7.5 cents); a statewide school employees health insurance pool; and a constitutional amendment to dedicate new sales tax revenue to the environment and the arts.

When all was said and done, the state ended up with a budget that increased overall spending by just over 10 percent. Legislative successes of note include: a statewide smoking ban, major energy reforms, funding increases for E-12 and higher education, expanded



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, from left, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and House Minority Leader Marty Seifert confer prior to the beginning of the final floor session May 21. Chief Clerk Al Mathiowetz and First Assistant Chief Clerk Patrick Murphy also wait for the session to begin.

health care coverage for children and increased funding for clean waters.

In the days following adjournment, all sides claimed victory. House and Senate leaders and the governor alike cast a positive light on the session.

High drama in the chamber

With mere hours left before the midnight adjournment deadline — and the bulk of the state's budget yet to be acted on — the scene on the House floor May 21 started as a virtual repeat of the preceding four-and-a-half months, with the House Republican minority taking its time grilling Democrats on provisions in their bills.

From the Republicans' perspective, it was only fair. They were being asked to vote on legislation worth billions of Minnesota taxpayer dollars — legislation that had been stalled in conference committees for weeks, and which many Republicans had never even seen before.

"They dumped 500-page bills on our desks with no time to even know what's in them," said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall).

But the Democrats saw it differently. Citing a pattern of similar behavior throughout the session, [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) accused the Republicans of filibustering, trying to drag the Legislature into yet another special session. In order to finish on time, he decided extraordinary measures were necessary.

Using a rarely invoked parliamentary procedure, Sertich, with the help of Kelliher and the 83 other DFL House members, shut down debate, effectively silencing the Republicans and forcing votes on several of the session's most important bills.

The atmosphere in the chamber quickly deteriorated, with indignant legislators shouting over one another and Kelliher outright ignoring the Republicans. Sertich admitted the move was ugly and unfortunate, but he said it was necessary.

"Tonight we had the session down to the 1-yard line, and the minority caucus got called on a delay of game," Sertich told reporters at a press conference minutes after adjournment. "It got a little bumpy, but we do have a responsibility to finish."

Seifert had his own football metaphor, however. Referring to the former head coach of the Minnesota Vikings, he accused

the Democrats of "Denny Green time management."

"They did 75 percent of the budget in less than six hours, and that is simply outrageous," he said.

Plagued by partisan troubles

It started out as a rough year for Republicans. In November 2006, the Democrats regained control of the House in a midterm election turnover, securing for themselves a muscular 85-49 majority in an electoral beating that left [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), House speaker for the previous eight years, in tears, literally, at a press conference a day later.

Not long after, both DFL and Republican leaders set about reassuring the public — and each other — that efforts would be made to work together in a bipartisan fashion. Less than two weeks into session, however, the stage was set for partisan squabbling when Republicans used the occasion of a supposedly noncontroversial federal tax conformity bill to challenge the new DFL majority's grip on power.

The three-hour tussle that ensued was only the first in a series of lengthy and sometimes heated floor debates that eventually led Sertich and others to accuse some Republicans of trying to "gum up the works" by stalling key pieces of legislation.

Frustrated by Pawlenty's ever-busy veto pen and by what they viewed as Republican obstructionism, some Democrats accused the Republicans of interfering with the will of the people.

"Under Republican control, property taxes went up on the middle class. Under Republican control, fees went up on all of the middle class.

Under Republican control, college tuition went up. ... And you know what the voters did? They elected all of us — the 85 of us — to come down to this House and direct the policy for this state," [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood) told her fellow lawmakers during a May 11 floor debate on a tax bill.

Some Republicans, meanwhile, claimed that DFL leaders had overestimated their mandate, having been swept into power

by of a wave of anti-Republican sentiment stemming largely from external circumstances — namely congressional corruption scandals, President Bush's plummeting approval ratings and the increasingly costly war in Iraq. Sviggum said as much in his post-election press conference, and [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) articulated the notion clearly when he responded to Slawik's speech on the floor.

"You're here because of an Iraq war and a positively unpopular president," Cornish told the Democrats.

"At a certain stage in time, the pendulum swung your way. And the thing I love is, you think you're here for all the liberal reasons you stand for, and that's just not true."

Democrats needed only to recruit five Republicans to reach the two-thirds majority needed to override a

gubernatorial veto; however, under Seifert's leadership, the Republicans held firm, keeping the ever-enticing possibility of an override always just out of reach and allowing Pawlenty to block key Democratic initiatives — even the transportation bill, which had the support of a handful of Republicans.

Those initiatives aren't dead yet, however. The House and Senate are scheduled to reconvene at noon on Feb. 12, 2008. When they do, much of the legislation that didn't make it through the process this year is likely to be taken up again.

Bills authorizing state funding of stem cell research, legalizing the medical use of marijuana, creating dedicated funding for the outdoors and the arts, and millions of dollars worth of bonding projects are all candidates to be revived in 2008.

"We are committed to coming back and doing the work that we left on the table," Sertich said. 🗽



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The session countdown clock zeroed out at midnight May 21.

"You're here because of an Iraq war and a positively unpopular president. At a certain stage in time, the pendulum swung your way. And the thing I love is, you think you're here for all the liberal reasons you stand for, and that's just not true."

— Rep. Tony Cornish

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard and acted on in the House May 17- 21 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

BUSINESS

Replacing the Metrodome

Members of the House Taxes Committee were privy to the goal of the Vikings' 2008 legislative session game plan May 18 when plans for a new \$954 million retractable roof multi-purpose stadium were shared. No action was taken.

The stadium would be located on the current Metrodome site "to meet the needs of the next generation of sports fans," said Roy Terwilliger, chairman of the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission.

With the Minnesota Twins and University of Minnesota each building their own stadiums and the Vikings' Metrodome lease up in 2011, there is urgency to act on stadium funding during the 2008 session, Terwilliger said. "This is our last chance to have a climate-controlled facility to hold major events."

Terwilliger said renovating the Metrodome, which opened in 1982, is not an economically viable option. However, building on the site would "maximize tax dollars," he said, because the public infrastructure is in place to support the neighborhood redevelopment the team envisions.

Team officials hope the new stadium would open in 2012. The team would likely play at the University of Minnesota during construction. A new stadium there is expected to open in 2009.



Illustration courtesy of the Minnesota Vikings

An artist's rendering of the new proposed Minnesota Vikings stadium complex.

A presentation breaking down private/public funding percentages of recently built stadiums prompted [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) to question: "What are you going to be asking of us?"

While hedging on what the financial request might be, Terwilliger, a former state senator, left little doubt that the Metrodome's future will be on the legislative docket. "We all know the numbers are vague. It is going to take some hard work to establish the level of appropriate funding."

— L. SCHUTZ

EMPLOYMENT

Independent contractor licensure

A bill that would shield employers when hiring certain contractors received House approval.

It would require independent residential and commercial construction contractors to get a certificate from the [Department of Labor and Industry](#), which would exempt them from having workers' compensation paid on them by an employer. The two-year certificate would cost \$150.

"This protects contractors that hire them as independent contractors so they don't end up being employees of theirs, a situation where 'I'm an independent contractor and I work for you, but I don't have this certificate. I fall off the roof and now I become your employee because I don't have the certificate and you're liable for my workers' compensation,'" said [Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), who sponsors [HF1283*/SF1103](#) with [Sen. Satveer Chaudhary](#) (DFL-Fridley).

Approved [92-41](#) by the House, the bill awaited action by the Senate Finance Committee when session ended. However, the provision was included in the omnibus economic development finance bill ([HF122](#)).

Among concerns addressed by opponents is that this would require creation of 14 new full-time equivalent positions at the department, and that it does nothing more than add costs to independent contractors.

[Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti) unsuccessfully tried to amend the bill to remove licensed residential contractors from the requirement, because they already receive department oversight. "There is a lot of abuse in the contracting community, and this is one way we can get at it. It's very regulatory, but at least we can take the legal, licensed contractors out of this and not put one more hoop for them to jump through," he said.

The bill is needed because people are breaking the law by working without insurance, thereby costing every taxpayer money in uncompensated care, said [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul). "We have done everything in this bill to address the concerns of legitimate contractors that hire legitimate people and pay the correct bill, whether it's unemployment insurance or worker's compensation insurance. ... It'll save more than it expends by having people have insurance."

— M. COOK

ENVIRONMENT

Dedicated funding in limbo

After waiting for nearly a decade, supporters of a constitutional amendment to dedicate funding for the environment and the arts will have to wait some more.

A proposal to raise the state's sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent and dedicate the funding to fish and wildlife habitat, clean water and cultural heritage made it as far as a conference committee this year — as it did the previous year — but fizzled when legislators simply ran out of time.

The House bill ([HF2285](#)), sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), called for divvying up the revenue, projected at more than \$290 million a year, as follows:

- 25 percent for fish and wildlife habitat;
- 25 percent for clean water;
- 15 percent for parks and trails;
- 15 percent for drinking water protection;
- 10 percent for arts and cultural heritage; and
- 10 percent for the Legislature to appropriate at its discretion for the purposes listed above.

The Senate version ([SF6](#)), sponsored by [Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller](#) (DFL-Mpls), would have appropriated the money differently, with:

- 43 percent for clean water and parks and trails;
- 33 percent for fish and wildlife habitat, land and forest resources; and
- 24 percent for arts and cultural resources.

Both bills made rapid progress through their respective legislative bodies during the final weeks of session. A conference committee convened the last day of session to work out a compromise between the two bills, but time ran out as legislators were forced to instead take action on several of the session's major budget bills before the 12 a.m. adjournment deadline. Conferees disagreed over how best



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich, left, confers with Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller during a May 21 meeting of the Dedicated Funding Conference Committee.

to allocate the money, and also quibbled over the precise wording of the question that would have to be submitted to voters for approval on the 2008 ballot.

Both bills have the potential to be brought up for consideration again in the 2008 legislative session; however, many advocates were hoping the measure would pass this year so that they could have ample time to raise funds to help drum up public support for the proposal.

Opponents of dedicated funding argue that it amounts to “budgeting through the constitution,” and that it ties the hands of future Legislatures that may want to use the money for other purposes. Some lawmakers also oppose funding the measure with a sales tax increase, arguing that a portion of the existing tax should be dedicated instead.

— N. BUSSE

Fridley), the bill would have increased the fee up to 5 percent of the \$100 fee paid every five years by notaries for their license to perform the service. Currently, notaries can charge up to \$1. The last change in the fee occurred in 1983, when the maximum charge was increased from 25 cents to \$1.

Pawlenty, in his [veto message](#), wrote that the increase was too much.

“I would support a more reasonable fee increase, but a 500 percent increase is too large,” he wrote. “It could adversely impact businesses and individuals who require notarization of documents.”

Supporters said the increase would have helped offset the increase to the notary-licensing fee made several years ago.

[HF144/SF463*/CH127](#)

— S. HARDING

Chisholm) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), the bill would have created a 14-member board to craft an insurance pool that would have mandated participation from the approximately 200,000 school employees statewide.

“Creating the statewide mandatory insurance pool by this bill does not address the real factors that are driving school districts’ health-care costs upward,” Pawlenty wrote in his [veto message](#). “As a result, little if any savings are expected from this bill.”

The governor also objected to the logistical uncertainties previously posed by bill opponents, including the composition of the governing board, the absence of detailed reserve requirements and the negative impact the pool could have on school districts who’ve kept insurance costs down.

“In short, this bill leaves too many issues unresolved,” he wrote.

[HF464*/SF276/CH142](#)

— M. SIMPSON

GOVERNMENT

No notary fee increase

**Vetoed
by
the
governor**

A bill that would have raised fees charged by notaries was vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-

INSURANCE

No school insurance pool

**Vetoed
by
the
governor**

Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed a bill that would have established a mandatory health insurance pool for all school employees.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-

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or (800) 657-3550

2007 New Laws

A complete review of all new laws passed this year is expected to be available after July 1 at the New Laws 2007 Web page, <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/NewLaws/NewLawsmain.asp>. To receive an electronic notification when the New Laws have been posted, go to www.house.mn/list/join.asp?listname=houseinformation.

Arranged by category, readers will find user-friendly access to stories that explain, in depth, the new laws. A link is provided to the actual bill text that was passed into law. By typing in a key word, an index will help readers find under which category the new law being searched for is located.

Because this is the first year of the biennium, bills that were introduced but not acted upon could see new life in the second year of the biennium. Stories on some of the more high-profile bills not making it into law and those that were vetoed will also be featured.

BONDING

Disaster assistance

A western Minnesota city will receive a grant for flood cleanup, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth) and [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), the law will provide Browns Valley with a \$2 million public safety grant to be used for relief from damage caused by a March 2007 flood. The grant is available until June 30, 2009.

The law, effective May 24, 2007, also amends the 2005 and 2006 bonding laws by adding Browns Valley to the list of cities or projects eligible for money from a pool of \$52 million set aside for flood hazard mitigation grants for publicly owned capital improvements to prevent or alleviate flood damage.

[HF2433](#)*/[SF2236](#)/CH122

— S. HEGMAN

CONSUMERS

Restricting lead in jewelry

Effective Sept. 1, 2007, a new law restricts the manufacture and sale of jewelry, including body piercing jewelry, containing lead.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the law uses federal guidelines regarding safe levels of lead content as a basis for restricting the sale of certain kinds of jewelry in the state.

Under the law, it is illegal to manufacture jewelry intended for sale in Minnesota, including body piercing jewelry, which contain unsafe levels of lead as specified by the law. It is also illegal to sell jewelry, including body piercing jewelry, which is advertised as having safe levels of lead unless it meets certain standards established by the law.

Tighter restrictions apply to jewelry intended for children under age 6. The restrictions do

BOARD WATCH



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Members await House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher's announcement of the vote tally on the attempt to override the governor's veto on the omnibus transportation finance bill.

Stay informed over the interim

Session Daily, the online companion to Session Weekly, will be updated during the interim when news from the House warrants. Subscribers to Session Daily receive e-mail alerts whenever a new article is posted. To subscribe to Session Daily, log on to <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/list/join.asp?listname=sessiondaily> or call (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550. For information on House meetings scheduled during the interim, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/hinfosched.asp. To subscribe to the house schedule electronic mailing list go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/list/join.asp?listname=houseschedule.

not apply to sales or free distribution of jewelry by a nonprofit organization. The law also spells out testing methods for determining compliance with the restrictions.

Thissen said the legislation originated with several incidents involving children swallowing jewelry containing lead.

[HF1656/SF1262](#)*/CH132

— N. BUSSE

Car buyer protection

A new law aims to help purchasers of vehicles know what they are buying.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), the Car Buyer's Bill of Rights will provide better information and protection to purchasers.

The law, effective Jan. 1, 2008, requires dealers to inform customers how much each add-on will cost, and how it will affect monthly loan repayments. This includes a motor vehicle services contract, theft deterrent device, and surface protection products, such as rustproofing, undercoating, fabric stain inhibitor and paint sealant or protectant.

The law will require dealers to provide installment payment information with and without certain option packages, and a buyer would have to provide a signature confirming they received such information.

The dealer must also disclose if it used a consumer credit report, and provide a toll-free number for the consumer to obtain a copy of the report.

Further, the law statutorily creates a definition for "certified" motor vehicle to

eliminate improper use of the term.

The law says that a vehicle cannot be termed certified if, for example, a dealer knows the odometer does not indicate actual miles; if the vehicle has been in a flood or incident; if its title is notated "damaged," "junk," "lemon law buyback," "rebuilt" or "salvage;" or if the dealer fails to provide a completed inspection report to the buyer prior to the sale. Simon said most dealers are using the term properly, and that the law is supported by the Minnesota Auto Dealers Association.

[HF1675/SF1333](#)*/CH99

— M. COOK

Full-value gift cards

A new law will eliminate expiration dates on many gift cards.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport), the law will make it unlawful for a business to sell a gift card that has an expiration date or a service fee of any kind, including for nonuse. Supporters said the law is needed because some card expiration dates are so short, and inactivity fees can make a gift card worthless in a matter of months.

BOARD WATCH II

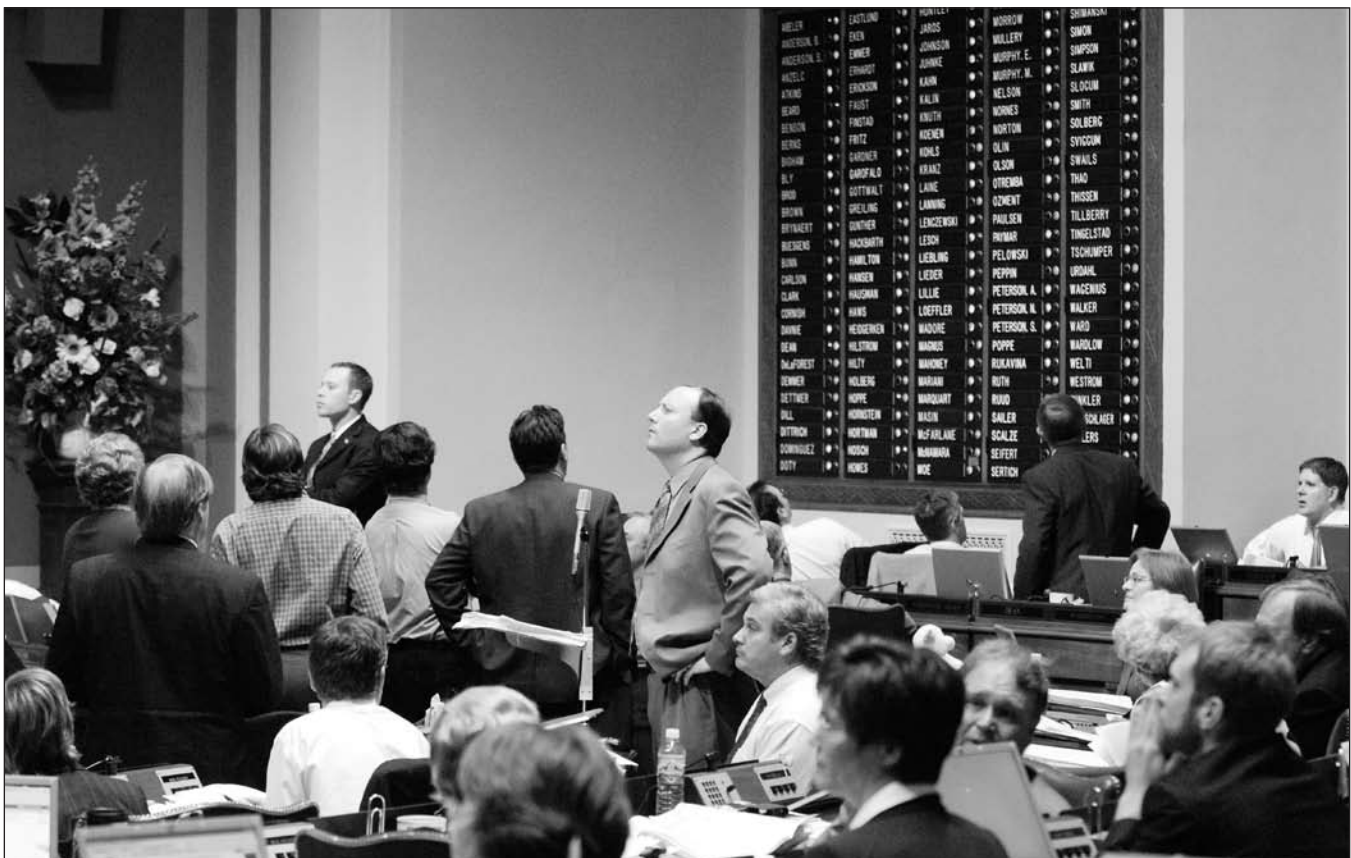


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Members nervously watch the voting board as the House unsuccessfully attempts to override the governor's veto of an omnibus transportation finance bill in the closing hour of the 2007 session.

The law applies to gift cards sold on or after the Aug. 1, 2007, effective date.

Exempted under the law are:

- those distributed for loyalty or promotional reasons without money given in exchange;
- cards distributed for employee recognition;
- cards sold below face value to employers or nonprofit organizations for fundraisers;
- prepaid calling cards;
- debit cards used to access a debit account; and
- cards that can be used at multiple sellers or goods and services, such as a mall card, provided any expiration date and associated fees are disclosed. These are typically bank-issued cards subject to federal regulations.

[HF512/SF69*](#)/CH93

— M. Cook

Credit, debit card protection

A new law is designed to offer protection to credit and debit card users' information.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the

law prohibits a business that accepts a credit or similar card for purchase from retaining an access code that permits use of the credit card more than 48 hours after transaction authorization. This can include a PIN verification code number, the three-digit number on the back of a credit card or the contents of a magnetic stripe. This is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

"This simply puts into law what already is the fact for retailers in the agreement they have already signed with Visa," Davnie said. "In that agreement they are responsible for the security of your data from your credit or debit card when it's in their immediate possession or when they transfer that data to a third-party processor."

A business that fails to abide by the law would be liable to a financial institution for costs resulting from a security breach and for the cost of any reasonable action it takes to protect itself or its customers, such as card cancellation, account closure or refund to the cardholder to cover the cost of any unauthorized transactions. This section is

effective Aug. 1, 2008, to allow retailers time to get educated on the new law, and install the proper safeguards to protect consumer credit and debit card data.

Bill Raker, president of US Federal Credit Union in Burnsville, told a House committee that one breach by the parent company of T.J. Maxx cost the financial institution \$22,700, not to mention customer fear that their data was being used illegally. More than 4,500 cards had to be replaced, sometimes taking up to two weeks. Card companies prohibit a financial institution from telling its members where the breach occurred.

[HF1758*/SF1574/CH108](#)

— M. Cook

Parental consent for piercings

A new law will require anyone under age 18 to have parental or legal guardian consent before having any body part pierced, excluding an earlobe.

Those providing piercing services must also witness the parent or legal guardian signing and dating the consent notice.

CENTER OF ATTENTION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher meets with press in the Rotunda late on the last day of session, May 21.

Those providing piercing services found in violation of the new law will be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) and [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), the law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

Body piercing is defined in statute as “the perforation of any human body part other than an earlobe for the purpose of inserting jewelry or other decoration or for some other nonmedical purpose.”

Otremba said current state law requires parental consent for tanning and tattoos, but not piercing. The issue came from a parent who was shocked there were no laws regarding the issue, she said.

[HF1013/SF112*/CH98](#)

— P. OSTBERG

CRIME

Gangs are a nuisance

Beginning Aug. 1, 2007, law enforcement officials will have a new tool to help rein in gang activity.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), a new law classifies gang activity as a public nuisance, and allows a county or city attorney, or the attorney general, to seek an injunction against any person or group for the habitual use of a place for these activities.

Violators will be subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 and up to 30 days in jail.

The original House language placed additional responsibility on the owner of the place where gang members gathered. However, because of the possibility that landlords would be unfairly included in civil suits, a provision was added exempting property owners from liability if they can prove to have made reasonable efforts to stop the activities.

[HF49/SF493*/CH150](#)

— C. GREEN

Do not disturb

Anyone who intentionally destroys, mutilates or injures human burial sites or human burial grounds will be guilty of a felony, under a new law. A person will also be guilty of a felony if they disturb human burial grounds or remove human remains without consent of the appropriate authority.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), the new law clarifies how to deal with remains found outside of recorded cemeteries.

State Archaeologist Scott Anfinson said there are around 12,500 known burial mounds

E-12 DEBATE

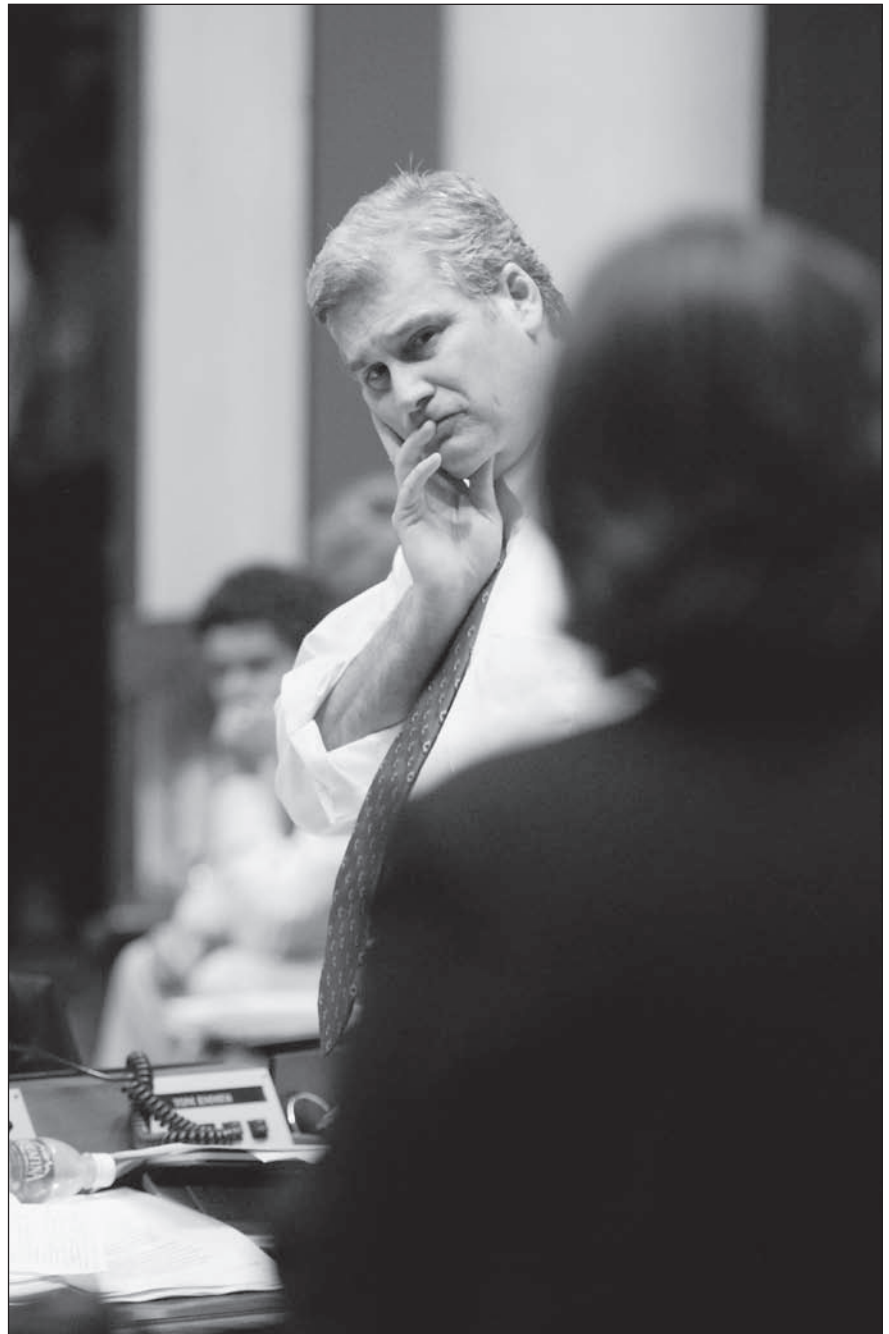


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Emmer listens as Rep. Nora Slawik explains the early childhood portion of the revised omnibus E-12 education finance bill during the May 21 debate.

and more than 6,000 known cemeteries in the state.

A person who, without the consent of the appropriate authority and the landowner, intentionally, willfully and knowingly does the following is guilty of a gross misdemeanor:

- removes any tombstone, monument or structure placed in any public or private cemetery or authenticated human burial ground;
- removes any fence, railing or other work

erected for protection or ornament within the limits of a public or private cemetery or authenticated human burial ground; or

- discharges any firearm upon or over the grounds of any public or private cemetery or authenticated burial ground.

The law takes effect Aug.1, 2007.

[HF1710/SF2226*/CH115](#)

— S. HARDING

EMPLOYMENT

Payroll card payments

A sunset of a law that permits employers to pay employees through a payroll debit-type card will be extended for one year.

When passed in 2005, the law contained a May 31, 2007, expiration date. A new law extends the expiration date to May 31, 2008.

The law, effective May 19, 2007, is sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin).

Atkins said both employees and employers would like to continue the program, but there are some “modest changes” they’d like to make. He expects a bill on those changes to be before the Legislature next session.

In 2005, supporters said that an estimated 13 percent of Minnesota workers did not have a bank account and often used check-cashing stores that charged an average of 2.5 percent to cash checks. The cards, akin to a debit card, would eliminate the need for check cashing.

[HF1554/SF1495](#)*/CH87

— M. Cook

Viewing personnel records

A new law aims to ensure that employees know they can review their personnel file.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) and [Sen. Tom Neuville](#) (R-Northfield), the law requires employers with more than 20 employees to provide written notice to a newly hired employee concerning the rights and remedies regarding their employment record.

The law, effective Jan. 1, 2008, also requires employers to provide this information upon termination of employment.

As defined in [statute](#), a personnel file “to the extent maintained by an employer, means: any application for employment; wage or salary history; notices of commendation, warning, discipline, or termination; authorization for a deduction or withholding of pay; fringe benefit information; leave records; and employment history with the employer, including salary and compensation history, job titles, dates of promotions, transfers, and other changes, attendance records, performance evaluations, and retirement record.”

The law comes two years after legislative changes were made to statutes allowing for greater disclosure of employee information by an employer.

[HF287/SF221](#)*/CH119

— M. Cook

Unemployment provision changes

A new law makes a variety of changes to unemployment law.

While many of the changes are technical in nature, the law does provide an additional 13 weeks of benefits for workers laid off from the Ainsworth Lumber Company in Bemidji, Cook and Grand Rapids. To qualify, a worker must meet five eligibility conditions, including enrollment or recent completion of reemployment assistance training.

The law also includes up to 26 weeks of benefits for former Northwest Airlines mechanics who went on strike in August 2005 and were eligible to establish an unemployment benefit account with the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), but did not file a continued benefit request within the required time periods. This section is effective July 1, 2007.

The law does not include a 26-week benefit extension, as the House initially sought.

“This means so much to the people that have been treated with such disregard and contempt along the way,” said [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan).

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) found it ironic that the airline gave almost \$100 million in benefits to its top five executives, yet mechanics are losing their homes. “Something is wrong with the greed of corporate America today.”

[Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove) expressed concern that the law hurts people who made concessions with the airline and returned to work. “In a way, you’re setting up a system of winners and losers here. My concern is for those folks who did make concessions, who worked through some of these difficulties who weren’t made whole are now going to be left out.”

Sponsored by Mahoney and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), the law also:

- increases the penalty assessed on applicants receiving overpayments due to fraud from 25 percent of the amount fraudulently obtained to 40 percent;
- shortens from 30 days to 20 days the period of time an applicant has to challenge their benefit eligibility;
- ensures there is no deduction from an applicant’s weekly benefit amount for Social Security disability benefits in certain instances; and
- changes the part-time earnings deductibility for a worker receiving benefits from 100 percent to 55 percent. This is expected to have a positive impact on about 20,000 people.

[HF648/SF167](#)*/CH128

— M. Cook

ENERGY

Next Generation Energy Act

A new law enacts a package of aggressive energy reforms known as the Next Generation Energy Act of 2007.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) and [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), the law represents the bulk of the governor’s “Next Generation Energy Initiative,” which aims to bolster investments in renewable power, increase energy conservation and decrease Minnesota’s contribution to global warming.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law calls for cutting the state’s greenhouse gas emissions to below their 2005 base levels — 15 percent by 2015, 30 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2050. This comes from a bill ([HF375/SF192](#)) sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul). Ruud said that such a measure is necessary to help prevent a climate change catastrophe.

“We know that if we don’t do that, what the science says is that we will reach a tipping point,” Ruud said.

The law requires several state agencies to work together to come up with a “climate change action plan” by Feb. 1, 2008. Numerous factors, including the potential cost of such a plan to consumers, must be taken into account when developing the plan.

In addition, the law prohibits the construction of any power plants that would produce a net increase in carbon emissions after Aug. 1, 2009.

The conservation portion of the law, which takes effect July 1, 2007, aims to save Minnesotans money while reducing the environmental impacts of energy consumption. This comes from a bill ([HF1221/SF997](#)*) sponsored by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) and [Sen. D. Scott Dibble](#) (DFL-Mpls).

Kalin said the law contains a five-part conservation and efficiency strategy:

- establishing a statewide energy conservation goal of 1.5 percent of annual retail electric and gas sales;
- expanding and improving the state’s conservation improvement program;
- providing research and development and technical assistance to utility companies through the Department of Commerce;
- increasing energy efficiency in state buildings; and
- removing financial disincentives for utility companies to promote energy conservation.

The law also overhauls the state’s

COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

As time moved closer to adjournment May 21, House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, left and House Minority Leader Marty Seifert continued to try and communicate to get to the major bills. Chief Clerk Al Mathiowetz, center, continued to file paperwork.

Community-Based Energy Development statutes by expanding the types of projects that qualify for the program, increasing the financial benefits for communities that invest in renewable power and encouraging utilities to make use of C-BED projects in meeting the state's renewable energy standard.

The C-BED provisions, which come from a bill ([HF2253/SF2084](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) and [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), also require utilities to offer their customers the option of purchasing some or all of their energy from C-BED projects.

"You'll have the opportunity to purchase 100 percent Minnesota renewable energy," Peterson said, adding that the program will feature its own logo similar to the "Minnesota Grown" logo for locally produced foods.

Most of the C-BED provisions take effect July 1, 2007.

Also included in the law is a study on the potential costs and benefits of constructing a new nuclear power plant in the state, with a

report on the findings due to the Legislature by March 1, 2008.

[HF436/SF145](#)*/CH136

— N. BUSSE

Heating and cooling state buildings

A new law will require the commissioner of the [Department of Administration](#) to study geothermal and solar thermal applications for use in heating and cooling of state buildings. The law is effective July 1, 2007.

Sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) and [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), the law requires all building projects subject to a predesign review or that receive state funding to consider installation of the systems when practical.

Solar thermal is defined as "a flat plate or evacuated tube with a fixed orientation that collects the sun's radiant energy and transfers it to a storage medium for distribution as energy for heating and cooling."

"We're just missing an opportunity to have state buildings use less energy and invest in

renewable energy," Peterson said. By requiring system considerations in the predesign there is greater chance of incorporating the systems into state developments, he said. Plus, he noted, several manufacturers of the systems are located in Minnesota.

[HF1034/SF538](#)*/CH77

— P. OSTBERG

ENVIRONMENT

Mercury products restricted

A new law restricts the sale, use and disposal of certain products containing mercury.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), the law, most of which takes effect Aug. 1, 2007, would place a number of restrictions on products containing mercury, including:

- requiring that fluorescent light bulbs be recycled;
- requiring motor vehicle electric switches,

fluorescent or high-intensity discharge lamps, laboratory chemicals, reagents, fixatives and electrodes to be clearly labeled by retailers if they contain mercury;

- banning the sale of certain medical devices, mercury switches and miscellaneous products containing mercury; and
- banning the purchase, storage or use of elemental mercury and mercury-containing instruments in schools.

Effective July 1, 2008, retailers who sell fluorescent light bulbs will be required to display signs that read: "Fluorescent bulbs save energy and reduce environmental pollution. Note: Fluorescent bulbs contain a small amount of mercury and must be recycled at the end of their use. Contact your county or utility for recycling options."

During testimony heard in committee, Hortman said that fluorescent lamps and light bulbs alone are estimated to contribute as much as 173 pounds per year of mercury pollution in Minnesota's environment.

[HF1316/SF1085](#)*/CH109

— N. BUSSE

Renewable energy strategy

Effective May 22, 2007, a new law requires the state to develop a strategy to obtain the "maximum economic benefit" from the renewable energy standard.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield) and [Sen. John Doll](#) (DFL-Burnsville), the law requires the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), in consultation with the [Agriculture](#) and [Commerce](#) departments and the [Public Utilities Commission](#), to come up with a plan and report to the Legislature by Nov. 15, 2007.

According to the law, the report must take into account "consideration of both short-term and long-term opportunities for economic benefit" in achieving the state's newly adopted standard of using 25 percent of its power from renewable sources by 2025.

[HF660/SF563](#)*/CH107

— N. BUSSE

FAMILY

Revisions to child support laws

When the Family Law Child Support Act was passed in 2005, many of its provisions were to take effect in 2007. A new law makes minor technical adjustments, with two substantive changes.

Currently, child support payments are subject to an additional 2 percent above the current interest rate placed on any other monetary judgment in Minnesota. The new law removes the increase, which will hopefully

be an incentive for parents to stay current with child support payments, said [Rep. Steve Smith](#) (R-Mound), who sponsors the law together with [Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield).

With various effective dates, the law also states that a deviation in the amount of child support is permissible if the child has resided in a foreign country for more than one year, and that country has a substantially higher or lower cost of living.

[HF1500/SF1271](#)*/CH118

— C. GREEN

Commission on guardians

A new law, sponsored by [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), calls for a study group to make legislative recommendations concerning conservatorship and guardianship.

The study group is to make recommendations to the Legislature by March 15, 2008, about the rights of wards and protected persons, the powers and duties of conservators and guardians, the complaint process and training and financial auditing.

The study group must include, but is not limited to, representatives from probate divisions of the district courts in the metropolitan area and Greater Minnesota, county adult protection services, the Minnesota Bar Association, Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Guardianship Association.

[Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan) questioned the timing of the study. "This report isn't coming until March and it would be far too late for the Legislature to utilize it in a meaningful way. It's just going to waste a lot of people's time."

[HF1396/SF795](#)/CH126

— S. HARDING

GAMBLING

Gambling law changes

A new law modifies gambling definitions and clarifies game requirements and prizes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the new law:

- allows fraternal organizations to use gambling proceeds to pay taxes on leased facilities and certain utilities;
- allows linked bingo game prizes, not to exceed \$200, to be carried over from one occasion to another in a progressive linked bingo game;
- allows for \$5 pull tabs and tip boards; and
- requires the gambling board to not deny approval of games solely because they are similar to the name or image of a licensed commercial product.

The law has various effective dates.

The provisions relating to linked bingo are "necessary to improve the popularity of this form of gambling," Anzelc said.

[HF1691/SF1966](#)*/CH145

— P. OSTBERG

GAME & FISH

Game, fish, parks and more

A new law makes changes to a variety of state laws regarding hunting, fishing, parks and trails and other environmental issues.

Sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake) and [Sen. Tom Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), the law includes the language of what was originally the omnibus game and fish bill, a state lands acquisitions bill and others. It takes effect Aug. 1, 2007, unless otherwise noted.

Some of the changes include:

- banning the use of night vision goggles while hunting;
- repealing a prohibition on the use of smokeless gunpowder during the state's muzzle-loader hunting season;
- requiring anglers who catch any of three different invasive Asian carp species to report it to the [Department of Natural Resources](#);
- allowing crossbow hunting during the regular deer firearms season for any hunter with a valid firearms license;
- allowing the use of remote-controlled animal noise callers for hunting crows and any fur-bearing or unprotected animal species;
- creating an apprentice hunter validation that would allow individuals age 12 or older who lack a firearms safety certificate to hunt small game and deer, for a period of one year, if accompanied by an adult with a valid hunting license;
- directing the DNR to develop a program to encourage private landowners to make their land available for public hunting and fishing use;
- eliminating the reciprocal nonresident deer archery license fee and lowering nonresident deer hunting fees for individuals between 12 and 18 years of age;
- setting new restrictions on baiting deer;
- lowering the minimum draw weight for bows used for hunting;
- eliminating a ban on transporting raccoon, beaver and rabbit meat out of state; and
- effective May 26, 2007, exempting military personnel and veterans from the range and shooting exercise portion of the state's firearm safety certification requirements.

The state lands provisions included in the law allow for the addition, deletion, sale, conveyance or other transfer of certain lands

in Aitkin, Beltrami, Brown, Cass, Cook, Crow Wing, Dakota, Hennepin, Kittson, Lake, Nicollet, Red Lake, St. Louis, Washington and Winona counties.

[Explore Minnesota Tourism](#) is required to develop a “Minnesota Travel Green” program to recognize tourism businesses that have made a commitment “to reduce their environmental impact.”

Beginning July 1, 2010, the law bans the sale of household dishwasher detergents containing more than 0.5 percent phosphorous. This comes from [HF1382/SF1109](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids).

Effective May 26, 2007, the law exempts certain motor vehicle racetracks from statutory noise standards. This comes from [HF415/SF311](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jeanne Poppe](#) (DFL-Austin) and [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin).

The Uniform Environmental Covenants Act, which comes from [HF1063*/SF1051](#), sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), is also included in the law.

[HF1021/SF1131*/CH131](#)

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

Financing state government

After a previous veto, the omnibus state government finance proposal received Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s signature with one line-item veto.

The law appropriates \$551.8 million for fiscal years 2008-09 to fund state agencies, \$61.5 million less than the governor’s recommendation.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), all provisions are effective July 1, 2007. [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) sponsored the original House bill ([HF953](#)), and was the lead House negotiator as the bill was conferred with the Senate.

The law appropriates \$145.8 million to the Legislature, that includes the House, Senate and Legislative Coordinating Commission. Both the House and Senate are given additional money for one-time technology needs, which Kahn said would be used to update servers and equipment. Legislative offices are directed to “whenever possible, implement information technology systems that are compatible and work seamlessly across the legislature.” Information technology directors of the

departments are to submit a report describing their efforts on collaboration.

Under the new law, the [Office of Enterprise Technology](#) is appropriated \$24.3 million to fund projects such as information technology security, the first phase of an electronic licensing system, small agency technology infrastructure projects, and improving the tracking and reporting of state and federal grants.

The [Department of Administration](#) is to receive \$58.6 million for the state architect, plant management, human resources, state demographer, Land Management Information Center, Environmental Quality Board, state archeologist, Developmental Disabilities Council, public broadcasting and Minnesota Public Radio.

Special projects funded for the department include a real property Web based management system to track state-owned and-leased property, the creation of an Office of Grants Management to standardize the state grant-making management policies, and a targeted group business study on minorities and female-owned businesses through the use of state contracts.

The [Department of Revenue](#) is appropriated \$252.6 million of which a portion is to be used

HOUSE HELPERS



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Jim Davnie takes time during a May 18 House recess to entertain his children, 6-year-old Rose and 4-year-old Eamon.

to implement activities to gain \$42.5 million in additional revenue from individuals and businesses that currently do not pay all taxes owed. A report is due the Legislature by March 1, 2008, and Jan. 15, 2009, on performance indicators including the number of corporations, businesses and individuals noncompliant with the tax system. Money is designated to a health care access fund and an integrated tax software technology package to update the computerized systems that track tax processes.

The governor line-item vetoed \$80,000 for the acquisition of an Indian burial site in Becker County. Pawlenty said in his [veto message](#) that the state purchasing burial site property would set a precedent that would initiate a long-term financial implication.

Other departments and offices appropriated money include offices of the governor, state auditor, attorney general and secretary of state; the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, Department of Finance, Minnesota Gambling Control Board, Minnesota Racing Commission, Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, Council on Black Minnesotans, Chicano-Latino Affairs Council, Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, Minnesota State Retirement System, Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund, Minneapolis Teachers' Retirement Fund and St. Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund associations.

[HF548*/SF471/CH148](#)

— P. OSTBERG

Pension changes

A new law makes changes to public employee pension benefits and plans.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), the law covers a number of areas, including:

- authorization of an optional annuity election for the surviving spouse of a deceased former legislator;
- optional early division of legislators retirement plan allowances upon a divorce;
- expanding the membership of the general state employees and State Patrol retirement plans;
- authorizing investment in the State Board of Investment by the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund;
- administrative changes and amending portions of statute that govern the Correctional State Employees Retirement Plan of the Minnesota State Retirement System; and
- changes to disability benefits on a number of plans.

The law has various effective dates.

Much of the discussion revolved around the financial status of the St. Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund Association and the Teachers

LEGISLATIVE DIET



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Bruce Anderson comes prepared for a long day in the House Chamber May 19 with a selection of snacks.

Retirement Association. The law allows a temporary post-retirement adjustment mechanism for the St. Paul fund and requires the [Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement](#) to study how the mechanism is working. A report is due to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2009.

Murphy said the fund currently is "not great, it's not good, but they want it in the future to be better." The change allows one fund to step out and see what happens so other funds can look at similar proposals into the future, she said.

[HF1978/SF430*/CH134](#)

— P. OSTBERG

PUC technical change

A new law effective Aug. 1, 2007, makes a minor technical change to a statute regarding Public Utilities Commission proceedings.

Sponsored by [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Sandy Rummel](#) (DFL-White Bear Lake), the law makes a two-word clarification to a statute regarding communication rules.

Johnson said the bill "corrects an omission in statute."

[HF1549/SF1019*/CH88](#)

— N. BUSSE

PFA technical changes

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, a new law establishes grant caps and makes technical and housekeeping changes to statutes concerning the Public Facilities Authority.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) and [Sen. Dennis Frederickson](#) (R-New Ulm), the law establishes a grant cap of \$3 million per municipality for Clean Water Legacy total maximum daily load studies, and a similar cap of \$500,000 for phosphorus wastewater treatment reduction grants.

The law also clarifies the role and responsibility of the PFA's executive director in reporting to the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#).

Moesaid the law contained "a lot of technical, cleaning-up housekeeping changes."

The PFA is responsible for the "administration and financial management of three revolving loan funds and other programs to assist local governments and others with the construction of public infrastructure," according to the DEED Web site.

[HF790/SF1186*/CH96](#)

— N. BUSSE

Cooperative purchasing extended

Current law permits the commissioner of administration to enter into a cooperative purchasing agreement with governmental units and nonprofit organizations for goods, services and utilities. A new law extends

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

this permission to charities that solicit state employees for charitable contributions and charitable organizations that are recipients of a state grant or contract.

[Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope) sponsor the law, which takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

Byron Laher, director of public policy for the Greater Twin Cities United Way, said that not only will the law provide purchasing power for additional charities, it will help the state save money.

[HF1486/SF1755*/CH83](#)

— C. GREEN

Enterprise technology terminology

Terminology changes for the Office of Enterprise Technology are included in a new law.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, “intertechnologies” will be changed to “enterprise technology” and “voice, data, video” to “information technology.”

Sponsored by [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona) and [Sen. Dan Larson](#) (DFL-Bloomington), the law is, in part, the result of converging technologies.

Jack Ries, project manager with the office, told a House committee that today’s technologies combine video, data and voice; therefore, statute, as it reads now, is outdated.

[HF1688/SF1556*/CH100](#)

— P. OSTBERG

State employee charities campaign

A new law will streamline how state employees contribute to a combined charities campaign.

Sponsored by [Rep. Karla Bigham](#) (DFL-Cottage Grove) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the law defines “registered combined charitable organization” for the purpose of their participation in a yearly campaign in which state employees are encouraged to participate in donating to charities. The law requires charities that participate in the campaign to apply to the commissioner of employee relations by March 1 to be eligible for that year.

Under the law, no two funding campaigns that are related organizations may participate at the same time.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1957/SF1597*/CH101](#)

— P. OSTBERG

More CAAPB members

A House and a Senate member will be added to the [Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board](#), under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-

St. Paul), the law will increase to 12 the board’s membership that already includes the lieutenant governor, four gubernatorial appointees, three St. Paul mayoral appointees and two legislators. The board is responsible for preserving the architectural integrity of a 60-block area including the Capitol.

Mariani said additional members would “add political muscle” to make the case for needed investments to preserve the deteriorating Capitol building. “This is an incredible building we have here ... and we are at a critical point in the existence of this structure.”

According to its Web site, the board has four purposes:

- “(1) Preserve and enhance the dignity, beauty and architectural integrity of the capitol, the buildings immediately adjacent to it, the capitol grounds, and the capitol area;
- (2) Protect, enhance, and increase the open spaces within the capitol area when deemed necessary and desirable for the improvement of the public enjoyment thereof;
- (3) Develop proper approaches to the capitol area for pedestrian movement, the highway system, and mass transit system so that the area achieves its maximum importance and accessibility; and
- (4) Establish a flexible framework for growth of the capitol buildings which will be in keeping with the spirit of the original design.”

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF203/SF118*/CH94](#)

— P. OSTBERG

Sudan divestment

A new law requires the state to remove any holdings from accounts that directly benefit companies that are found to contribute to genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the new law directs the [State Board of Investment](#) to remove direct or indirect holdings from accounts that scrutinized companies are using to source actions contributing to genocide. It would effect somewhere between “\$80 million and \$90 million worth of international equity securities out of a \$15 billion portfolio,” said Howard Bicker, the board’s executive director.

Scrutinized companies include:

- those with business operations that involve contracts with, or provisions of, supplies or services to the government of Sudan, companies the government has direct or indirect equity share, government commissioned consortiums or projects or companies involved in those;

- those where more than 10 percent of the company’s revenues are linked to Sudan, or less than 75 percent of the revenues are linked and involve oil-related activities, mineral extraction activities or power production activities; and
- one that is complicit with genocide or supplies military equipment to Sudan.

The board has 90 days after the Aug. 1, 2007, effective date to make its best efforts to identify all scrutinized companies. The law lays out a procedure in which the board will divest publicly traded securities of scrutinized companies.

The new law will expire if the president or Congress declares that Darfur genocide has been halted for at least 12 months, has removed sanctions on Sudan, declares the Sudan government has honored commitments to cease attacks or has declared the divestments to be interfering with United States foreign policy.

[HF1332/SF1075*/CH117](#)

— P. OSTBERG

State board changes

A new law repeals expired state task forces, boards and advisory groups.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the law removes from state statute dozens of groups that are no longer active, such as the Building Code Administration Oversight Committee and Listed Metals Advisory Council.

Tingelstad said the law cleans up statutes to reflect the status of groups.

Advisory groups are to expire on June 30, 2009, under the law.

[HF1340/SF1377*/CH133](#)

— P. OSTBERG

Settling claims

Effective May 25, 2007, a new law appropriates \$51,164 from the General Fund to settle claims made against the state by various individuals, mostly prison inmates.

Sponsored by [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) and [Sen. Ron Latz](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park), the law appropriates \$49,954 to the [Department of Corrections](#) for payment of medical claims of inmates and those participating in sentence-to-service work programs.

Additionally, \$380 is appropriated to the [Department of Public Safety](#) and \$830 to the [Department of Revenue](#) to settle claims from two individuals regarding unnecessarily large driver’s license reinstatement fees and a property tax refund check that was delivered late by the U.S. Post Office, respectively.

Ozment said the law represents the work of the [Joint House-Senate Subcommittee](#)

on Claims, a division of the [Legislative Coordinating Commission](#).
[HF2293*/SF2044/CH137](#)

— N. BUSSE

Open meeting law

If there is a health pandemic or an emergency declared under the Minnesota Emergency Management Act, a new law authorizes meetings covered by the Open Meeting Law to be conducted by telephone or electronic means.

Sponsored by [Rep. Andy Welti](#) (DFL-Plainview) and [Sen. Rick Olseen](#) (DFL-Harris), the law allows for meetings to be conducted in this manner without being in violation of the Open Meeting Law if:

- the presiding officer, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer determines that meeting in person or by interactive television is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declaration under the Emergency Management Act;
- all members of the body can hear one another, all discussion and testimony;
- members of the public at the regular meeting location can hear all discussion, testimony and votes;
- at least one member of the body, chief legal counsel or chief administrative officer is present at the regular meeting location, unless unfeasible due to the pandemic or emergency declaration; and
- all votes are conducted by roll call.

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1303/SF1165*/CH110](#)

— S. HARDING

Indian Affairs Council membership

The composition of the [Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#) will change, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) and [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), the law will allow certain bands and tribes to have one member designated by elected tribal presidents or chairpersons of their governing body to the council. The designees will be the only voting council members. Currently voting members are the elected tribal leaders of the individual bands and tribes.

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

According to its Web site, the council “serves as the official liaison of the Indian tribes and the state of Minnesota.” Other designated council members include directors or commissioners of each tribal agency as designated and three House and three Senate members.

The law will make the arrangement of tribal leaders parallel to that of commissioners appointed to the council by the governor,

Hilty said. It will also update references to “Indian community” to “federally recognized tribes in Minnesota and the urban Indian communities.”

[HF1051/SF1048*/CH130](#)

— P. OSTBERG

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Health and human services funding

Biennial spending in state Health and Human Services departments — affecting nursing homes, housing, child care, health care, mental health and public health — in the 2008-09 biennium will reach \$9.7 billion, under a new law sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls). The figure was a compromise struck between House and Senate leadership,

and is \$50 million more than the governor proposed.

The governor signed the bill with nine line item vetoes aimed mostly at welfare expenditures.

More than 56 percent of ongoing new funding — \$94 million — will be applied to nursing homes, which will see a 2 percent increase in funding in fiscal year 2008 and 2 percent more over a multiyear period of rebasing, a process that shrinks the disparity between rural and urban facilities.

Major portions of spending are also allocated to health care initiatives, a key priority of both parties and the Pawlenty administration:

- \$28 million to remove barriers to coverage by shortening application forms, eliminating some verification requirements and removing the employee subsidized

TAPED OFF



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Rep. Paul Kohls put tape over his mouth to protest House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher abruptly putting an end to debate to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of the omnibus transportation finance bill. The override failed 83-50.

insurance (ESI), barrier, which prohibits entrance to MinnesotaCare within 18 months of utilizing employee-subsidized benefits;

- \$21 million for health care outreach that will include incentive programs and grant support for nonprofits and organizations that assist incoming enrollees;
- \$12.6 million to eliminate the limited benefit set established in 2003, and an eligibility increase for MinnesotaCare participants without children, the second at a cost of \$11.5 million; and
- \$5 million in 2009 and \$50 million in the 2010-11 biennium for the Cover all Kids proposal, which was significantly tapered down from original proposals to include application reforms, a children's health program and a two-month medical assistance extension for newly ineligible families.

The law also begins several health care reform efforts, including a study on the Minnesota Health Insurance Exchange proposal, which could consolidate purchase of

private insurance under one entity; the health care transformation task force, which will study how best to achieve universal access to health care in Minnesota; and \$14 million in grants to establish an interoperable, electronic records system in hospitals statewide.

The law also repeals the \$125 Supplemental Security Income penalty, which was revoked from a family's monthly Minnesota Family Investment Program grant if that family also receives federal SSI assistance. The governor vetoed two provisions that altered work requirements for MFIP recipients and one that would have offered car loan and repair funds for participants.

Funding will also go to:

- mental health initiatives, which receive \$34 million;
- counties, which will receive \$32 million to help replenish federal funding for case management;
- child care, including \$5.5 million to reduce child care co-payments;
- homeless prevention, including \$1 million

for the Minnesota Runaway and Homeless Youth Act;

- lead reduction activities under the Department of Health; and
- the Veterans Home Board and more than a dozen other health-related boards.

[HF1078*/SF967/CH147](#)

— M. SIMPSON

Radioactive materials regulations

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed into law May 18 a multi-pronged bill that modifies fees for possession of radioactive material and ionizing radiation-producing equipment, changes operating requirements for X-ray machines and extends the sunset date for a task force.

Under the law, sponsored by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester) and [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), licensees of radioactive material will experience two regulatory changes regarding application renewals: they will no longer pay a fee and their license expiration will be determined by the commissioner of health, instead of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In addition, facilities using ionizing radiation-producing equipment — medical and non-medical X-ray machines, accelerators and radiation therapy devices — will pay \$66 annually, instead of \$132 biennially, for registration fees.

The law, effective Aug. 1, 2007, also makes a technical change to X-ray operating requirements, and pushes back the expiration date from June 30, 2007, to June 30, 2011 of the Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force, which advises the health commissioner on the health care needs of mothers and children.

[HF1582/SF1215*/CH85](#)

— M. SIMPSON

Family planning bill signed

Family planning clinics may pay less for supplies and drugs under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), the law will permit family planning clinics to enter into cooperative purchasing agreements with governmental units to obtain pharmaceuticals and supplies more cheaply.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law will also allow registered nurses to dispense oral contraceptives under the supervision of a physician or nurse practitioner to women ages 12 and older, and will ask the health commissioner to propose medical assistance reimbursement rates that would better cover service costs.

[HF298/SF184*/CH139](#)

— M. SIMPSON

LATE NIGHT LISTENERS



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Reps. Aaron Peterson and Joe Atkins listen to the debate as the last night of session comes to a close.

Anatomical gifts

The Darlene Luther Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act is now law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) and [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), the law, named after former DFL legislator Darlene Luther, replaces the current [Uniform Anatomical Act](#) and updates statute language.

It allows an anatomical gift of a donor's body or body part to be made during the life of the donor for the purpose of transplantation, therapy, research or for educational uses.

In addition to adults, minors can donate if they are emancipated or if the parent or legal guardian gives permission.

The law states that a person can be a donor by indicating the choice on a driver's license or identification card, in a will, or if a person has a terminal illness or injury and communicates with two adults that they want to be a donor, provided one of the adults is a disinterested witness.

It also contains provisions for revoking donor status.

The law takes effect April 1, 2008.

[HF1074/SF883](#)*/CH120

— S. HARDING

Pharmaceutical regulations

Instead of trashing unused drugs, county jails and juvenile correctional centers will be permitted to return them to pharmacies, under a new law sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona).

The law allows medical supplies and unused drugs to be returned only if the medication is secured in locked storage and if facilities have a trained medication technician available around the clock.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the law modifies prescription certification requirements, stating that prescriptions must be certified before drugs are dispensed unless already approved by a licensed central service pharmacy. It also clarifies what prescriptions for legend drugs — which federal law stipulates can only be obtained by prescription — are valid.

The law states that prescriptions aren't legitimate if based solely on an online questionnaire, unless pharmacists can establish that the order is based on an adequate patient evaluation.

[HF1984/SF1959](#)*/CH103

— M. SIMPSON

More license regulation

Child care centers and providers, vulnerable adult caregivers and other licensed professionals will be affected by a new law.

Sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#)

SNAPSHOT IN TIME



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

On the last night of session, Rep. Kathy Tingelstad takes a snapshot of the House floor.

(DFL-Duluth) and [Rep. John Lesch](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law will, among other things:

- consolidate training requirements for child care professionals;
- require safety measures and training to reduce incidents of sudden infant death syndrome;
- allow use of technology to help caregivers of vulnerable adults track clients at night;
- permit counties to charge a background study fee — not exceeding \$500 — to corporate providers of adult and child foster care;
- require all license holders to cooperate with state and local agencies on pandemic flu preparedness; and
- clarify what information is public for applicants denied licensure.

The law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1577/SF1724](#)*/CH112

— M. SIMPSON

Health professionals regulations

A new law sponsored by [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville) makes regulatory changes affecting various health care professionals.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, unless otherwise noted, it will:

- require that all X-ray operators take a national exam starting Jan. 1, 2008, and restrict what procedures an X-ray operator can perform;
- permit medical students from foreign countries more flexible exam requirements, effective immediately;
- remove expiration dates for the acupuncture, respirator care practitioners, traditional midwifery and the physician assistant advisory councils;
- increase education requirements for audiology practitioners after Aug. 30, 2007;

- change supervisory, licensure, fees and board requirements for physical therapists;
- modify grounds for disciplinary action by health boards and what action may be taken; and
- change licensee requirements for professional clinical counselors, effective immediately, and social workers. Most provisions relating to social workers are effective Aug. 1, 2011.

[HF57/SF26](#)*/CH123

— M. SIMPSON

Mortuary science regulations

A new law provides changes to mortuary statutes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tina Liebling](#) (DFL-Rochester) and [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007. It removes expired and outdated language, adds new requirements, clarifies information and establishes several consumer protections.

Some of the updated statutes and new rules include:

- in certain instances, noncompensated persons with the right to control the body may remove it from the place of death; transport the body; prepare the body for disposition, except embalming; or arrange for final disposition of the body;
- allowance for a licensee, assisted by a non-licensed employee, to be in the licensee's presence, when removing a body from the place of death and the lifting of such body at the funeral establishment; and
- allowance for an unlicensed person to arrange for and direct or supervise a memorial service provided they disclose that information to the person with the authority to make the funeral arrangements.

The new law does not apply to or interfere with the recognized customs or rites of any culture or recognized religion in the ceremonial washing, dressing and casketing of the dead, provided they are in compliance with existing statutes.

[HF1072/SF802](#)*/CH114

— S. HARDING

Well contractor licensure changes

Two technical changes to state statute will affect well contractors beginning Aug. 1, 2007.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) and [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), the new law increases the corporate assurance bond submitted by an applicant for a well contractor's license from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

"We haven't increased the amount in 16 years, and we have put consumers at risk as result of that," Gottwalt said. He said this law will better protect consumers from improperly dug wells from "fly-by-night" contractors.

Additionally, the total fee for three or more limited well-boring contractor licenses is \$225; now the fee is \$75 each.

"This will streamline well contractor regulations by capping the total fee. Several contractors are paying much more than that, and that is unfair to them," Gottwalt said.

[HF1409](#)*/[SF1229](#)/CH124

— S. HARDING

CHECK-OUT TIME



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

House Majority Leader Tony Sertich checks his watch with about 20 minutes to go before the Legislature's constitutional adjournment.

HOUSING

Closing home equity loopholes

Equity stripping, or mortgage foreclosure rescue, is when someone approaches a homeowner facing foreclosure and convinces them to give up the equity in their home.

Typically, the targeted homeowner is told that they can keep the house if they turn over the deed to someone who can help with foreclosure costs. The house would then be sold back to the homeowner, they are told.

Once the exchange is made, the homeowner often discovers that the price to repurchase the house is much higher than expected. Forced to pay unexpected fees and a high rent to stay, most default on the agreement and face eviction.

In 2006, legislation was signed to protect these homeowners. Yet, a loophole allowed for some creative equity strippers to evict the homeowners if they relocated to another property.

A new law, sponsored by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), closes this loophole and provides additional safeguards.

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, the new law also requires a stay of eviction if the homeowners have initiated a suit to keep their house, and it removes a 2009 sunset date for all relevant statutes.

[HF1209/SF1533](#)*/CH106

— C. GREEN

Mortgage privacy

Current and future homeowners will have assurance their private information required for real estate transactions will remain private.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove) and [Sen. Warren Limmer](#) (R-Maple Grove), a new law prohibits consumer reporting agencies or any other business entity from selling or exchanging with a third party information from mortgage loan applications. The law also prohibits the selling of personal information from a mortgage loan application. Most of the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

The law also contains provisions for:

- increasing the dollar amount of the homestead exemption, and provides for inflation adjustments;
- prohibiting real property from being subject to execution under certain conditions;
- modifying limitation provisions relating to homestead property; and
- the right for building contractors to bring action for contribution or indemnity. This provision is retroactive to June 30, 2006.

[HF211/SF241](#)*/CH105

— S. HARDING

Trust fund for trailer parks

Residents living in a manufactured home park who become dislocated may be eligible for moving reimbursement, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine) and [Sen. Michael Jungbauer](#) (R-East Bethel), the law creates the Minnesota manufactured home relocation trust fund, which owners and renters will contribute to annually or upon the sale of a park.

Under the law, park occupants forced to move due to the sale or conversion of the property will be eligible for \$4,000 for a single-wide or \$8,000 for a double-wide home following a municipal hearing to assess moving costs.

Upon a sale, park owners will be obligated to pay 20 percent of the sale price or a base fee per home — whichever is less — into the fund, which will be managed by the [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#). Parks that sell for less than \$500,000 will be required to invest a lower percentage of the total value.

[HF1205/SF1196](#)*/CH141

— M. SIMPSON

INDUSTRY

Construction code changes

A new law, sponsored by [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), makes technical and other changes to construction industry codes.

The law:

- asks the [Department of Labor and Industry](#) commissioner to adopt a state fire code and transfers various powers from several state agencies to the department;
- consolidates violation enforcements, including assessments, penalties, subpoena powers, notice timelines and license suspension and revocations; and
- modifies membership composition, per diem rates, duties, sunset dates and other aspects of various boards, including the Construction Code Advisory Council, the Board of Electricity, the Plumbing Board and the Board of High Pressure Piping Systems.

Most provisions take effect July 1, 2007.

[HF1208](#)*/[SF998](#)/CH140

— M. SIMPSON

INSURANCE

Updating insurance laws

A new law updates the state's insurance statutes relating to accelerated benefits, minimum reserve liabilities, illustrations, comprehensive health insurance and other areas.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver

Grove Heights) and [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), the law, which has various effective dates, modifies actuarial tables, increases minimum comprehensive health benefits and updates language on a variety of insurance-related subjects.

Atkins said the insurance industry is in unanimous support of the law, as is the [Department of Commerce](#).

During a March 22 committee hearing, Atkins joked that the law might be "the single most boring piece of legislation" he has ever sponsored, adding, "We haven't even been able to pay anybody to come up and testify against this."

[HF1892/SF1581](#)*/CH104

— N. BUSSE

Airplane insurance goes up

Owners of airplanes will have to increase certain insurance policy minimums from \$25,000 to \$100,000, under a new law.

Impetus for the bill came from the family of Toby Pearson. He was involved in a 2003 plane crash in Grand Marais, which took the life of his wife, and left surviving daughters with continuing medical injuries.

Pearson told a House committee that after years of litigation because the aircraft insurance company refused to pay the medical bills, the costs and emotional loss still "far outweigh the insurance minimums," in the new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), the law changes the minimum coverage to \$100,000 per passenger seat liability both for bodily injury or death and for property damage, and for bodily injury or death to each nonpassenger in any one accident. Also, the minimum per occurrence for bodily injury or death to nonpassengers in any one accident will rise from \$50,000 to \$300,000.

This section is effective Jan. 1, 2009.

A report from representatives of aircraft owners, aircraft pilots, insurance companies that issue aircraft insurance, and other interested parties is due to the Legislature by Nov. 15, 2007.

[HF772/SF608](#)*/CH79

— P. OSTBERG

Collision repair regulation

A physical inspection will be required when a repair is needed on a car damaged in collision cases, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights) and [Sen. Linda Scheid](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), the law states that insurers in collision cases cannot adjust a damage appraisal of a repair shop when the damage is in dispute without first conducting a physical inspection of the vehicle. Nor can insurers

specify the use of a particular vendor for procurement of parts or other materials needed to repair the vehicle. Insurers are not required to pay more than a reasonable market price for parts of like kind and quality in adjusting a claim, under the law.

Atkins said the impetus for the bill came from “a phenomenon that occurs sometimes with insurance companies and repair shops where there’s some friction about how the repair is going to take place and who’s going to do it and where they’re going to get the parts from.” The change is a result of bringing the insurance companies and repair shops together to figure out how to deal with the issue, he said.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1949/SF1542](#)*/CH80

— P. OSTBERG

LAW

Regulating data privacy

A new law puts tighter restrictions on the sale of Social Security numbers by nongovernmental entities and addresses other data practices issues.

Sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), the new law makes adjustments to data practice regulations for the Department of Transportation, the Department of Corrections and the Bureau of Mediation Services. For instance, if someone’s name is incorrectly associated with a criminal history, and this is proven through fingerprint verification, the identifying information must be removed from public history data. Also, law enforcement agencies may include an identifying photograph on a no-contact order.

House provisions not making it into the law include:

- an increase in the penalty for willful violation of the Data Practices Act by public employees;
- permission for parole and probation authorities to access records regarding a weapon permit for a defendant, parolee or probationer; and
- modifications to provisions and requirements for the testing of newborn infants for genetic and heritable diseases.

[HF1360/SF596](#)*/CH129

— C. GREEN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Appointments for Anoka

A new law will allow the City of Anoka to appoint its housing and redevelopment authority commissioners.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka)

GOP REACTION



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert shares his thoughts about the 2007 session with reporters shortly after its conclusion.

and [Sen. Michael Jungbauer](#) (R-East Bethel), the law states that Anoka may provide, in its home rule charter, procedures for appointing the commissioners. It is effective upon local compliance.

[HF2223/SF2043](#)*/CH125

— N. BUSSE

Protecting resorts

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, a new law aims to protect resort owners from local ordinances that might prevent them from maintaining their buildings.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) and [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), the law allows resort owners to conduct maintenance on existing structures and replace damaged or destroyed structures as long as their establishments continue to operate as resorts.

The law allows owners to “minimally” expand their building structures when necessary to bring them into compliance with new federal, state or local buildings codes — provided that such expansions do not bring the structures any closer to a shoreline. It also prevents a change in ownership of a resort from being construed by local governments as a conversion to a different use.

Speaking on the House floor May 14, Moe said the law is designed to help out “mom-and-pop” resorts.

[HF849/SF961](#)*/CH92

— N. BUSSE

Merging two library systems

Upon local approval, the Hennepin County Library system and the Minneapolis Public Library system will merge.

A new law, sponsored by [Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), directs the Minneapolis system to transfer all property and assets — including buildings, library collections, artwork, equipment and the Minneapolis Central Library parking ramp — to Hennepin County.

The city will remain responsible for any city-issued bonds for capital improvements for the Minneapolis Library system, and will contribute operating funds to the county for 10 years.

Benefits and seniority of all transferred employees will be protected, while Minneapolis employees may continue participating in their current retirement funds.

The merger will increase efficiencies and allow for the reopening of three Minneapolis branches closed because of financial constraints, Carlson said.

[HF1973/SF1812](#)/CH121

— C. GREEN

County boundary move

About 30 miles west of the Twin Cities, the City of Rockford straddles the Crow River. Most of the city is west of the river and located in Wright County, while a 16 square-block section east of the river is in Hennepin County.

Effective May 22, 2007, the counties may begin the process of changing their boundaries so that the entire corporate limits of Rockford are within Wright County.

One of the reasons for the change is to reduce response time for emergency services for Rockford residents in Hennepin County, said [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Amy Koch](#) (R-Buffalo). According to resident testimony, it is not unusual for those in the much larger Hennepin County to wait up to 20 minutes before county emergency support arrives, while just blocks away, residents of Wright County receive aid in a matter of minutes.

Rockford Mayor Michael Beyer said the change would also reduce redundancies in services provided.

[HF1141/SF837](#)*/CH102

— C. GREEN

Annexation task force extension

In 2006, an advisory task force was established to study and make recommendations on what changes should be made to laws governing municipal boundary adjustments. A new law extends the life of the task force to June 30, 2008.

The law, effective May 22, 2007, and sponsored by [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) and [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), also requires the task force to produce a report by Jan. 15, 2008. Any expenses incurred in preparing the report will be divided between the League of Minnesota Cities, the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota Association of Townships.

The task force will be made up of two House members, two senators, three representatives for cities and their interests and three for the townships. The first meeting must take place no later than Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF267/SF303](#)*/CH90

— C. GREEN

Land dedication fee clarified

Effective Aug. 1, 2007, a new law clarifies state municipal planning and zoning laws allowing cities to accept a fee in lieu of a land dedication for streets, sewers, utilities and parks.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), the law specifies that the size of the fee be determined by the “average fair market value of the unplatted land ... under the city’s adopted comprehensive plan, to be served by municipal sanitary sewer and water service or community septic and private well.”

Hilstrom said the law came about because the Builders Association of Minnesota

“wanted some uniform standards for how to evaluate what the value of the land was.”

[HF1629/SF1396](#)*/CH116

— N. BUSSE

Hibbing agency assets transfer

A new law allows for the dissolution of the Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency, and a transfer of its assets and liabilities to the Hibbing Economic Development Authority.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the law is effective upon local approval.

According to its Web site, the authority offers development assistance for new and expansion-minded businesses interested in locating in Hibbing. The authority also coordinates a loan program for construction or equipment with the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#), Iron Range Resources or other area lending institutions, allowing for tremendously flexible terms.

The agency was created by statute in 1961 to support the growth of Hibbing, but today is active in name only, Sertich said.

[HF180/SF54](#)*/CH91

— C. GREEN

Scott County authority renamed

A 2006 report states that because of an expansion of the “urban fringe of the Twin Cities,” Scott County will experience strong population and household growth in the near future. The Metropolitan Council projects that by 2020, Scott County will have approximately 194,000 residents, up from 89,500 in 2000.

Looking toward this future development, the Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority has been renamed the Scott County Community Development Agency.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Sen. Julianne Ortman](#) (R-Chanhassen), the law is effective upon local approval.

[HF1161/SF1045](#)*/CH78

— C. GREEN

Scott County oversees library system

Following the examples of Hennepin and Washington counties, a new law allows the Scott County Board of Commissioners to operate and manage its county library system. Effective upon local approval, the law will place the operations of the library system under the auspices of the board.

The current library board will continue to exist, focusing on the collections of the libraries and managing use of the library rooms, said [Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee),

who sponsors the law with [Sen. Julianne Ortman](#) (R-Chanhassen).

Since the library board only meets once a month, while the county board meets several times a month, and with the recent growth of the county, it only seems prudent that daily operations and financial accountability fall to the county board, Beard said.

Jon Ulrich, chairman of the board of commissioners, said the new law will provide for better oversight and accountability of the library system, and allow the libraries to become more integrated into the culture of the county.

[HF531/SF547](#)*/CH97

— C. GREEN

Maintenance facility to be sold

The future of the Northwest Airlines maintenance facility in Duluth is no longer in doubt, but to whom it will be sold or leased is still in question.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) and [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), a new law will allow the city to sell or lease the maintenance facility that has not been used since 2005 when Northwest mechanics went on strike and the company filed for bankruptcy.

The law, effective July 1, 2007, also states that the lease or sale is subject to approval of the finance commissioner if there are bonds outstanding for financing the facility. No approval is required if the bond trustee has taken control of the facility as a result of a default.

[HF1175/SF962](#)/CH138

— S. HARDING

Cities can provide wellness programs

One of the best ways to keep medical costs down for any organization is for its employees to stay healthy. Some government entities even provide employees with access to fitness classes, workout equipment and healthy meal options.

Signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 10, a new law adds cities to the local government units that may provide these services. It is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[Rep. Bev Scalze](#) (DFL-Little Canada), who sponsors the law with [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), said that while the law simply adds cities to a current statute that provides this permission for state and county employees, it also permits cities to operate employee recognition services, and provides staff and facilities for preventive health programs.

“Lifestyle changes have a significant impact on the cost of health insurance,” Laurie

Elliott, human resources manager for the City of Shoreview, told a House committee. The program will help cities with health care cost containment and encourage employees to take care of their health, she said.

[HF905/SF1311](#)*/CH59

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Metropolitan Council changes

Cleaning up outdated and erroneous references in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act and streamlining administrative procedures, a Metropolitan Council housekeeping bill is now law.

The regional planning agency serving the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area, the council provides essential services to the region, such as wastewater treatment and public transportation.

Effective May 23, 2007, the new law calls for the creation of a nonprofit organization that will “help acquire or finance the acquisition of lands and other assets for public recreation and open space within the metropolitan area.” The council will contribute \$500,000 from its general fund, and establish an advisory committee and a board of directors to get the foundation started.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law also calls for a one-time transfer of up to \$1 million from the council’s Livable Communities Demonstration Account to assist local communities with comprehensive planning.

Not included is a provision doing away with the [Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government](#), a bipartisan committee that provides council oversight and budget review.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed [HF881](#) May 3, sponsored by Hilstrom and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), because it called for eliminating the commission.

[HF882/SF1302](#)*/CH113

— C. GREEN

MILITARY

Support Our Troops program

Eligibility requirements for grants made through the Support Our Troops license plates program are expanded, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) and [Sen. Tony Lourey](#) (DFL-Kerrick), eligibility is broadened to include military personnel, “like a soldier who is injured and returns home, but did not get to the classification of veteran,” said

Haws. This would currently apply to about 40 individuals.

More than 13,000 [Support Our Troops](#) license plates have been purchased since they became available in 2005.

The Minnesota National Guard manages the account that can grant up to \$2,000 to an eligible Minnesota resident serving in regular active military duty, and any member of a National Guard or Reserve unit based in Minnesota who is serving in any active military service, as well as a member of the service member’s immediate family.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007

[HF1157/SF1675](#)*/CH86

— L. SCHUTZ

Consumer contract cancellations

A new law will help military personnel and their families get out of consumer contracts without penalty when they are deployed or if their duty station changes.

Under the law, sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley) and [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), protection will be offered for rental, club, membership travel or service contracts without penalty. By law, a service contract includes “those for services such as television, computer, Internet service and any other type of service.” It would be applicable to contracts executed by or on behalf of the affected person

that would result in it being impractical for the person to enjoy the contract benefits.

Wireless service contracts will be effective 30 days after the provider receives notice of the service member’s order for activation, deployment or change of utility station.

It also prohibits utilities from disconnecting service if a member of the household has been ordered into active duty or a change of duty station, under certain circumstances.

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF532*/SF409](#)/CH111

— M. COOK

RECREATION

Amusement ride regulations

Amusement ride owners will be required to have annual and daily ride inspections, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tim Faust](#) (DFL-Mora) and [Sen. John Marty](#) (DFL-Roseville), the law is in response to an incident in Faust’s district in which two girls fell out of an amusement ride due to operator error.

Under the changes, amusement rides must be inspected at least once annually by a certified inspector, and before daily operation by the owner or operator of the amusement ride. The certified inspector must be an employee of the insurance company that insures the amusement ride or an independent inspection service provider that the insurance company or owner has contracted.

Also, a ride cannot be operated unless there is an insurance policy with limits of at least \$1 million per occurrence and \$2 million aggregate, insuring all owners against liability for injury to a rider.

Further, owners are required to have a documented training policy for the operation of rides, under the law. The ride owner must have a written certification for each person operating the amusement ride. Owners must also maintain a first-aid incident report log resulting from the ride. Any serious injury, defined as a result in death, dismemberment, disfigurement, compound fracture or permanent loss of the use of a body organ, member, function or system that requires hospital admission within 24 hours of the accident, must be investigated by the local law enforcement or the [Department of Labor and Industry](#).

Under the new law, a ride operator or owner may impose and enforce reasonable safety rules regarding the behavior of riders. They will be able to prohibit or remove a rider from a ride if they violate the safety rules.

The law is effective Jan. 1, 2008.

[HF1824/SF1370](#)*/CH95

— P. OSTBERG

RECYCLING CENTER

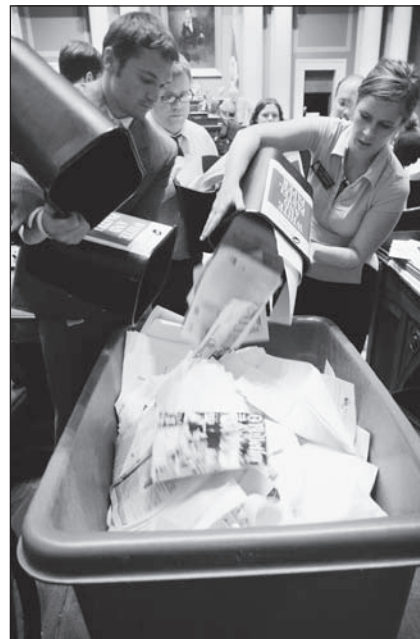


PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

When the representatives left the floor at the conclusion of the 2007 session, House pages recycled the paperwork that accumulated during the 14-hour session.

SAFETY

Air bag replacement

Motor vehicle airbags must be replaced with those specific to the vehicle, under a new law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley) and [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), the law requires a person with knowledge

that a motor vehicle's airbag has deployed or is missing may not perform collision repair on that vehicle unless an airbag is replaced with one designed for the make, model and year of the vehicle. Also, a person may not knowingly install or reinstall any object in lieu of an airbag. A person who violates the above terms is guilty of a misdemeanor.

"Repair shops are sometimes replacing

the airbag if they feel like it," Tillberry told a House committee. Also, shops are occasionally replacing the airbag container with items such as pop cans, he said. "Now the Coke can says it's the real thing, but it ain't the real thing for this."

The law is effective Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1704/SF1464](#)*/CH71

— P. OSTBERG

Gov. EYE VIEW



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Four hours before the Legislature's constitutional deadline for adjournment, Gov. Tim Pawlenty assesses the final hours of the session at a news conference.

Dear Readers:

The Legislature adjourned May 21 and is scheduled to reconvene for the second year of the biennium at noon, Feb. 12, 2008. This special issue of Session Weekly provides a wrap-up of all legislation considered during the final days of session, including Gov. Tim Pawlenty's actions on the major spending bills presented to him after session was completed.

To our readers currently on the Session Weekly mailing list, your free subscription will be rolled over to next year. The first issue of Session Weekly for the 2008 session is scheduled to be published on Feb. 15.

Of course, House activities do not come to a standstill during the interim. And Session Daily, the online companion to

Session Weekly, will be updated during the interim when news from the House warrants. Subscribers to Session Daily receive e-mail alerts whenever a new article is posted. To subscribe to Session Daily, log on to <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/list/join.asp?listname=sessiondaily> or call (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

For information on any House or many legislative commission meetings scheduled during the interim, go to www.house.mn/hinfo/hinfosched.asp. To subscribe to the house schedule electronic mailing list go to www.house.mn/list/join.asp?listname=houseschedule.

During the 2005 session, language in the omnibus state government finance law allowed for sponsorships to help underwrite Session Weekly production and mailing costs. We would like to thank those of you who made a voluntary donation this year. Donations are still encouraged and can be made by sending a check, payable to Minnesota House of Representatives, to House Public Information Services, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155. However if you choose not to contribute, you will continue to receive Session Weekly during next year's session.

Session Weekly staff

From soldier to student

College centers provide returning vets and their families a place to connect

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

For Andy Davis of St. Peter, finishing his degree work at the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota proved at first to be a challenge. It wasn't the rigors of his junior-level course load, nor that he was several years older than most of his counterparts. It was that he had just spent the last five years in places that most students have only heard about, and having experiences that were not related to everyday life on a college campus.

After graduating high school, Davis had joined the Army's elite 3rd Ranger Regiment. By the time he was 25, he was honorably discharged and returning to civilian life after seeing some pretty serious action as part of the initial invasion into Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now as a college student, he felt like he didn't belong. "I felt I had nothing in common with the lives these people were living here," he said.

Returning to civilian life, especially for combat veterans, isn't easy. The Minnesota National Guard recognizes this and holds reintegration academies across the state to help families prepare for their soldiers' return. And statistics show that returning soldiers attending postsecondary schools find it extremely difficult to stay focused on achieving the degree. There is a drop-out rate of approximately 30 percent.

Reasons for this vary, but the intensity of the war experience is a contributing factor. Davis said that when you are in the military, it's like a family — "supportive and people looking out for one another." In fact, he said that many returning vets recognize their time in the military as one of tremendous personal growth.

Setting up a network

As discharged military often do, Davis sought out others who share the military experience. "They provided me with a social network," he said.

This former Boy Scout, Eagle Scout and House candidate found himself, once again, called to active duty, but this time it was to help him and his veteran comrades' transition into the world of higher education.

In 2004, Davis and a fellow student led the charge to establish a nonprofit support organization for veterans at the university. Called Comfort for Courage, the veterans transition center not only serves as a sort of



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Andy Davis stands in the Comfort for Courage veterans transition center at the University of Minnesota. He cofounded the program, which serves as a model for others that are being established across the state.

A new Web site, www.mymilitaryeducation.org, is available to help answer Minnesota veteran's questions about education benefits. Help is also available by calling (800) 456-8519.

safe-haven for student-vets, but also volunteers have shipped tons of comfort items to service personnel stationed overseas. From a small space in the basement of Eddy Hall on the Minneapolis campus, it provides a place for veterans to talk with each other, ask questions and learn how to access benefits for which they are entitled.

A good idea spreads

Don Pfeffer, a counselor at Central Lakes Community College in Brainerd, also saw the veterans' needs. He connected with Davis, and while the mission is similar, the Brainerd office Pfeffer started took a different focus — bringing in the family dynamic. "I'm a Vietnam vet, and now 35 years later I understand the impact it had on my family when I got out of the service."

Pfeffer said the campus is a natural place for veterans and their families to find support and answers to their questions. "It is a nonthreatening environment," he said.

Including the university program, which remains running as a nonprofit, there was a smattering of offices on college campuses growing up from grassroots efforts.

However, the idea caught the attention of state lawmakers. Last year, the Legislature allocated \$600,000 for each of five years to the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) to set up six [regional veterans higher education assistance offices](#). Pfeffer joined the department as the program director.

The legislation calls for each university and Minnesota State College and Universities system campus to provide adequate space for

Soldier continued on page 35

Every body counts

Mapping and preparation for 2010 census has begun

By PATTY OSTBERG

Congressional districts are supposed to be identical in population, “down to the last person, if possible,” according to State Demographer Tom Gillaspy. Although Minnesota’s population continues to increase, it could lose one of its eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The seat loss scenario could arise if Minnesota’s population growth rate is not as high as South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina.

If Minnesota’s population grows, and those other states are a little bit slower, the census reports that Minnesota will retain the seat, Gillaspy said. The decision comes down to less than 2,000 people moving in or out of the states. That is why the 2010 census count is so important.

Every 10 years, the state demographer’s office and the U. S. Census Bureau work together to get the most accurate count of people. The census is paramount to legislative redistricting and drawing congressional lines.

Local government aid, municipal street aid, school district funding for community education and other programs, transportation planning and distribution of federal money all hinge on the results of the census.

Included in the omnibus state government finance law is \$300,000 for census 2010 preparation.

Difficult numbers to gather

Every household in the state should receive a census form around March 2010. Recipients will be left at a crossroads: fill out the bar-coded questionnaire or wait for the census taker to knock at the door. And they will come a knockin’, according to Gillaspy.

This personal appearance can sometimes be

troubling for those at both sides of the door.

Imagine a census-taker walking into a neighborhood of recent Latino immigrant families and saying, “Hi, I’m from the federal government. I’d like to ask you some questions,” Gillaspy said.

Many immigrants move here without knowing the language, and have never experienced a census process. “We want to make sure people understand this is for the census. It’s good for you to answer the questions,” he said.

Part of informing immigrant communities includes creating full-count committees through local minority councils and recruiting religious leaders to explain the importance of the census process. The U. S. Census Bureau also provides questionnaires in a variety of languages and hires translators to help.

Getting accurate numbers in northern Minnesota can also be difficult.

It’s not unheard of for some places to get 1 foot to 2 feet of snow when census takers are recording information. Or if a small population of people live on an island with water still partially frozen over, it can be difficult to get to those areas to take a correct count. Minnesota was one of the last states that had census takers on sled dog teams in

the 50s, Gillaspy noted. Now they work to get a count in those areas beforehand and make sure people send back their forms before they have to send a census taker out, he said.

Other population counts include places where homeless people may live.

On March 31 of the year ending in 0, census takers head out for an evening called “S-Night.” According to Gillaspy, “Census takers literally go out to shelters, railroad yards, under bridge decks and into caves,” that were identified as places where people might be living.


A report from the U.S. Census Bureau from the 2000 S-Night shows the population for those living in emergency and transitional shelters in Minnesota totaled 1.6 percent of the state’s population.

Map and ad preparation

When local government aid for cities and counties depends on population counts, it’s important to have the correct addresses to get the census to every household, Gillaspy said. It’s a lot of “checking and checking and checking. If you can imagine just how many streets and how many addresses there are in Minnesota, it’s a pretty big job.”

One of the first steps in getting that envelope to the door involves the state demographer and the U.S. Census Bureau doing preliminary checks. This summer, local government officials are expected to meet with the demographer’s office to discuss specific review programs, and to look at maps with boundaries and address lists to identify problem areas or groups of addresses that are perhaps not identified.

They will also meet one on one to discuss issues such as annexation. For example, each decade Rochester generally has a number of changes in boundaries that can be complicated and difficult to reflect on a map. “We need to make sure they are done as accurate as possible,” Gillaspy said.

Thousands of workers need to be recruited for periods of time from two months to two years. In 2000, the need for workers was so desperate recruiters stood on street corners with job applications offering them to those in vehicles stopped at red lights. 

Looking to a better future

Economic development law helps job seekers, housing needs

By Mike Cook

Most of a slimmed down law received the governor's blessing.

The omnibus jobs and economic development law now checks in at approximately \$415.98 million, with \$341.5 million in net General Fund money. It is about \$33 million less than [SF2089](#), which was previously vetoed. Technically, [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm) sponsor the law. However, [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) was the lead House negotiator and sponsor of the vetoed bill.

"He has deeded it over to me for a short time as a foster mother," Murphy said.

According to Tomassoni, the total pre-veto package was about a \$93 million increase with a combination of one-time and ongoing money. Pawlenty vetoed almost \$5 million to create the finished product.

Among the changes between the vetoed bill and the law are:

- a nearly \$16.5 million reduction to \$14.9 million for the 21st Century Minerals Fund, an Iron Range business development fund;
- \$500,000 less to \$2 million for Youthbuild programs, which help high-risk youth learn housing construction job skills and complete their high school education;
- a \$550,000 reduction to \$750,000 for the sesquicentennial commission to help prepare for the state's 150th birthday in 2008; and
- elimination of \$250,000 for a nanotechnology development fund program.

The agreement calls for a \$5 million increase in the Minnesota Investment Fund, with \$3 million dedicated for a Thomson West expansion in Eagan; \$400,000 for Rogers tornado relief; and \$350,000 for an increase in statewide redevelopment grants.

Murphy said the new law, most of which takes effect July 1, 2007, will help drive growth and economy throughout the state, while supporting working Minnesotans. "It supports research and development in the biotechnical industry, it improves small

business support services to rural Minnesota, to women, minority, small-business owners and youth. It enhances the marketing of Minnesota tourism, it reinvests in our cultural and historical assets, and it increases the vitality of arts organizations across the state by restoring many cuts that have been made since 2002."

"This is truly a bill that is worthy of signing," said [Rep. Bob Gunther](#) (R-Fairmont).

The law was piggybacked on a bill offered for years by Rukavina, to require all American flags sold in the state be made in the United States. That provision is in the law.

Job training

Included in the law is \$99.86 million in workforce development money, \$66.87 million from the General Fund and the remainder from the Workforce Development Fund, which is revenue collected from a workforce development tax of 0.10 percent on all taxable wages paid by employers.

Among the highlights is the \$2 million for the Youthbuild program. The appropriation may be used to restore three programs that were eliminated due to budget cuts, plus an inflationary increase, and to add seven additional sites to the current 10. It is hoped that the number of students served can increase to 500 per year, compared to 306 in 2006.

According to the its annual report, the program received \$754,000 in state funds in

Vetoed items

- \$2.5 million in debt relief funding for the RiverCentre in St. Paul;
- \$575,000 in one-time funds to the Iron Range Resources for five projects: \$225,000 in infrastructure for an Aitkin County peat project, \$150,000 for the Iron Range Youth In Action program; \$75,000 for B'nai Abraham Synagogue preservation, \$75,000 for infrastructure improvements at a Chisholm baseball field and \$50,000 to a retriever club for pond and field construction;
- \$500,000 to improve the Upper Sioux community water system;
- \$500,000 for the safe patient handling program's second year;
- \$350,000 to reduce community center debt in Inver Grove Heights;
- \$200,000 to HIRED;
- \$150,000 to the Hennepin-Carver Workforce Investment Board;
- \$100,000 for the Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board; and
- \$75,000 for the second year for the Hockey Hall of Fame in Eveleth.

2006 and leveraged more than \$3 million in matching funds. A four-year study indicated the program generated \$7 million for the state from increased tax revenues and reduced corrections spending.

The law also allocates:

- \$18 million for the state's vocational rehabilitation program for people with significant disabilities;
- \$12.5 million for extended employment services for people with disabilities;
- \$3.3 million for employment support to people with mental illness;
- \$2.65 million to fund summer youth employment programs in Minneapolis;
- \$1.2 million to fund summer youth employment programs in St. Paul;
- \$910,000 for training of hard-to-train individuals; and
- \$750,000 for immigrant and refugee programs, including job seeking and workplace orientation.

While supportive of the final product, [Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) is disappointed employment development programming money had to be removed from the law.

"The reports that have come out on unemployment, for the first time in 30 years,

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Seeking something special

A last-second bill could help ease special education shortages

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

A senior at Minneapolis Southwest High School, McKenzie Erickson is the student body president, takes Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes and has testified several times before the Legislature. She also has severe dyslexia, and didn't receive the help she needed until she was already failing the third grade.

"That was several years where I could have been receiving services, and who knows what my potential could be now. I could be a few more years ahead," she said. "If there is more money (for special education), more students would succeed like I have."

A new law, which lays out biennial spending for all of E-12 education, also includes a compromise for special education spending. It is less than what the Senate wanted and more than what the House had originally allocated, but it is an attempt to deal with special education funding problems that have been developing over many years.

Short-changed

In 1975, the federal government enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which mandated that states provide free and appropriate education; however, Minnesota has since received no more than 18 percent of the 40 percent of funding that the federal government pledged to pay for the mandate.

In the current biennium, education gets 40 percent of the state's \$35 billion budget, and special education makes up 7.7 percent of the education budget.

The most recent data from the National Education Association shows that it costs an average of \$7,552 annually to educate a regular student, while special education students cost \$16,921.

Barbara Burke, special services director for White Bear Lake Area Schools, said it also costs more to employ special education teachers,

because their training typically puts them within three credits of a master's degree.

Special education teachers also work longer into the summer, need more prep time and have more paperwork that is required for special education students, she said.

The cross subsidy

School districts receive funding for special education from the state and the federal government. More often than not, the funding received is not enough to cover special education costs, so local school districts are forced to fund special education on their own.

To make up the gap in funding, school districts have to siphon money from other regular school programs to pay for special education. This is known as a "cross subsidy."

Take, for instance, Richfield. With a \$2 million cross subsidy, it has had to cut classes, close buildings and become creative with staffing. Superintendent Barbara Devlin said the district had to close one elementary school and redistribute students to other schools, resulting in the cutting of many support staff positions while raising class sizes in other schools.

Also, the option for students to register for seven classes in high school has been eliminated — along with the debate team, with its high cost but low student turnout. Furthermore, Richfield has used interns for counselors, social workers and psychologists to offset cut staff.

White Bear Lake Area Schools Superintendent Ted Blaesing said his district also reduced one course offering for every high school student, mandating that students take a study hall. Middle school students also lost a class period. "Over the last five years, we had to cut 73 regular education teaching staff, and next year class sizes will rise to 28, 34, and 35.5 in elementary, middle and senior high."

The cross subsidy for the state, according to the [Department of Education](#) will be more than

\$518 million in the state in fiscal year 2007 that local school districts have to make up.

[Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope) said there is a "growing tension" between regular education and special education because of "continual cross subsidy of funding required by school districts to meet the special education mandates." Peterson blames the state and federal government.

"Special education funding needs to be given to districts so they don't have to take it out of their general fund to subsidize those programs," she said.


The state's answer

This year, a new law hopes to address the problem. Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) and signed into law May 30 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the legislation will increase the amount of funding for special education from \$529 million in fiscal year 2007 to \$694 million in fiscal year 2008 and \$719 million in fiscal year 2009.

In the new law, total special education excess cost aid from the state, which is available for special education programs and services, will increase from \$105 million in fiscal year 2007 to \$111 million for fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Not everyone is happy with this approach. If you asked superintendents if they would prefer more general formula or special education dollars, "You're going to get different answers all across the state," [Rep. Bud Heidegerken](#) (R-Freeport) said.

Heidegerken believes that money should be placed on the general formula, and said it would be better spent helping students with early intervention, before kindergarten. "If they're in special education in third or fourth grade, they will be there 'til they're in 11th and 12th grade," he said. "There are still 21 1/2-year-olds in high school."

"With this bill, there will be winners and losers," Heidegerken said. 

Collegiate costs

Additional money seeks to keep tuition increases down

By Mike Cook

A new higher education funding plan was given a mostly passing grade by the state's top official.

Technically sponsored by [Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) and [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the law contains nearly \$3.17 billion in funding for the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, Mayo Foundation and the [Office of Higher Education](#).

The funding increase is approximately \$361.5 million, or 13 percent, over the November forecast base for the 2008-09 biennium and 14 percent higher in the base for fiscal years 2010-11.

Performance measures are established for the university and MnSCU so that 1 percent of their funding is contingent on meeting three of five goals established for each.

The law also includes \$58.6 million in new financial aid monies, including a \$2.5 million increase in child care grants; and a 4 percent reduction in the assigned family responsibility factor, an increase in the tuition and fee maximums, and an increase in living and miscellaneous expense allowance, all of which are used to calculate state grant awards. It also increases by \$100 the matching grant in the college savings program for families with an annual income below \$50,000, and increases from 5 percent to 10 percent the contributions for program participants with a family income between \$50,000 and \$80,000.

[Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) line-item vetoed two provisions: \$100,000 for loan repayment assistance to attorneys who enter "public interest law," and \$50,000 for the Washington Center for Internship Experiences. The former, he said, has been funded for 15 years without taxpayer assistance and should continue to be funded by the state's legal community. The latter he axed because many

postsecondary schools are working with private organizations to establish internships without state money.

"When the bill left the House it was an excellent bill; when it came back from conference committee it was a great bill," said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), who sponsored the original House bill ([HF797](#)), and was the lead House negotiator. "Now that we've been forced to do a little more compromising, it's still a very, very fair and OK bill for students and the people of the state of Minnesota."

The primary change from the bill [vetoed](#) by Gov. Tim Pawlenty May 9 is a funding increase in the governor's ACHIEVE plan to encourage low-income students to take rigorous high school courses in exchange for \$1,200 in college funding.

"The program is piggybacked on the federal Academic Competitiveness Grant program," Pappas said. "The eligibility requirements are almost the same, but the federal government is going to provide up to \$750 for the first year of undergraduate studies and up to \$1,300 the second year for full-time students. Our

students can be full time or part time."

The law calls for \$3 million of program funding in fiscal year 2008, \$7 million in fiscal year 2009 and \$10 million in each year of the 2010-11 biennium. The governor's initial biennial request was \$112 million, but that was decreased to \$78.9 million in his January budget recommendations.

Conference committee members expressed concern that the initial outlined "rigorous" standards were no more than what a student needs to meet the state's graduation standards, so the final product requires a student to at least attain a C in the required classes. They also expressed concern about funding a pilot program instead of using the money elsewhere to help students.

Other changes from the first bill include the elimination of a small surcharge assessed on nonresidential construction projects that would have gone toward helping fund construction management programs at three campuses, and an additional \$2 million for the Minnesota GI Bill along with a provision allowing the money to be used for upper division classes.

"I've been real encouraged by what is in the bill," [Rep. Carol McFarlane](#) (R-White Bear Lake) said on the House floor. "It has new money for our institutions, it holds down tuition for

"I've been real encouraged by what is in the bill. It has new money for our institutions, it holds down tuition for our students, there are programs to inspire students to be more prepared for college and it contains tuition banding that will keep costs down for our students."

— Rep. Carol McFarlane

our students, there are programs to inspire students to be more prepared for college and it contains tuition banding that will keep costs down for our students."

Banding tuition at the university's Crookston, Duluth and Morris campuses will allow students to

pay for only 13 credits, even if they take more. When combined with other funding, it is expected to result in slight tuition increases at the Crookston and Duluth campuses, but an expected 10 percent decrease at Morris for a Minnesota student from a family with income under \$150,000.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) is not pleased that a tuition freeze, which he successfully amended to the

College costs continued on page 36

Little more than status quo

Many transportation initiatives fail to become law

By Mike Cook

Things may only get worse for Minnesotans accustomed to sitting in congestion, driving on bumpy roads and not being able to get from Point A to Point B using public transportation.

After months of talking about funding transportation improvements, the best legislators could do is a so-called “lights-on” law. Without it, the [Department of Transportation](#) would shut down July 1.

They initially passed a package ([HF946](#)) that supporters said would have put more than \$8 billion into highways, city and county roads, and transit in the next decade. However, it included a number of tax increases and was vetoed May 15 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Included in his veto message was that the “entire array of tax increases in this bill would cost an average family in Minnesota up to \$500 per year.”

With about 15 minutes left in the 2007 session, an attempt to override the veto could garner just 83 of the 90 needed House votes. [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) and [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls) voted no along with all Republicans.

“It’s hard to believe we want to raise taxes when gas is at an all-time high,” said [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria), one of four naysayers to express their view on the House floor. Nobody in support of the bill spoke.

As a result, a nearly \$3.8 billion status quo package was signed into law. Sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston) and [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing) it is about \$380 million less than the vetoed proposal.

“Much more needs to be done, but the advocates overreached,” Pawlenty said May 22. He suggested supporters shouldn’t have went “for the whole enchilada and get nothing. ... I told leaders that if they came

in with a more reasonable plan, maybe the results would have been different.” He doesn’t expect those groups to stop, however. “The advocates will not be happy until they get a gas tax increase.”

“Generally the strategy of all or nothing usually doesn’t work. It doesn’t allow for cooperation and compromise, and it doesn’t allow you to move ahead,” added [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon). “It’s got to be the 7.5-cent gas tax, and it’s got the 40 percent increase in the car license tabs, and it’s got to be the half-cent sales tax, and it’s got to be the wheelage tax.”

To keep the Metro Transit system operating as is, the law provides \$20 million in one-time money to the Metropolitan Council. If funded at base levels, the system would have had to make some severe cutbacks, Lieder said.

The law does transfer some money within the trunk highway fund to the Minnesota State Patrol.

“This year is probably the first year in the state’s history where we are going to have a candidate school for state patrol that is very diverse in nature,” Murphy said. “The chief feels that it is imperative that this school move forward and that we get these troopers up and ready to go because there are a lot of retirements that are going to happen inside the state patrol.”


Driver and vehicle services fees are raised in the law, primarily a 75-cent increase in a driver’s license, instruction permit and identification card. The goal is to make the [Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety](#) a fee-based service.

Also included is a one-time increase in the airport development and assistance fund and \$200,000 for an airport funding advisory task force. “This is going to help us once and for all figure out what the funding levels should be for our airports,” Murphy said.

Language is also included in the law so the Northstar Commuter Rail project continues without delay.

The lone line-item veto by Pawlenty was \$200,000 to the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs for participation in the Urban Partnership Agreement Congestion program. In his [veto message](#), the governor said the law allocates up to \$1 million to fund state activities in support of a federal program. “If the state is to fund their activities with Trunk Highway funds, those activities must be managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation under appropriate consulting and/or technical service contractual agreements.”

Additionally, an omnibus transportation policy bill ([HF1351](#)*/[SF1971](#)), sponsored by Murphy and [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls) received conference committee approval on the last day of session, but was not brought to the House or Senate floor. In part, it would have permitted heavier truck weights in some instances; changed the way impound lots notify people about their vehicle and let people get certain belongings; required a study on greenhouse gas reductions; required a report on Internet-based driver education; and it would have changed speeding tickets, so that speeds of 69 mph or less in a 60 mph zone would not go on a driver’s record.

[HF562](#)*/[SF360](#)/CH143 

Reluctant approval

Governor, legislative leaders disagree on E-12 package quality

By STEPHEN HARDING

Ascaled down E-12 education law covers everything from declining enrollment to the creation of a task force to compare federal and state special education requirements.

While critical of the process used to construct the law, [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) said she still thinks the law is good. “We have over an 8 percent increase for the biennium and \$794 million in new funding, and that is nothing to sneeze at.”

Pawlenty signed the law with reluctance. “This K-12 education bill failed to provide the level of general formula funding I proposed. It is also devoid of any real educational reform or accountability initiatives. Worse yet, this bill actually steps backward from the reform efforts from prior years,” he wrote in his [veto message](#). Nearly \$5.5 million in spending was red-lined.

House Republicans echoed the state’s top official during a floor debate, calling the product underwhelming, mediocre and shameful. They also said it would widen the funding disparity between school districts.

Early Childhood Family Education is increased 14 percent and Head Start is going up by 5 percent, said [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division chairwoman. “Overall the early childhood package is very good. We’re back to restoring the cuts in 2003 and moving forward from there.”

Effective July 1, 2007, unless otherwise noted, the law outlines \$13.7 billion in spending and policy for the biennium. It is \$197 million less than the original House bill ([HF6](#)), but it’s still a \$794 million biennial increase over the base.

New laws and funding

The general education fund is being increased 2 percent in fiscal year 2008 or about \$93 million, and 1 percent in fiscal year 2009, or about \$150 million. The House bill proposed a 3 percent increase each year.

A major House DFL priority, voluntary all-day kindergarten funding, was dramatically cut in the law. Originally the \$94 million allocated in fiscal year 2009 would have covered all students that wanted to participate, but the law allocates \$32.5 million for the biennium. Nonetheless, Greiling said “significant steps” have been made.

A nine-member school finance reform task force will be established to create a standard and index to ensure that the education funding formula remains adequate over time. It also will simplify the remaining school formulas, analyze the different categories of the funding formula and establish a schedule for implementation of the other new formulas. This is from [HF1702/SF1232](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tim Faust](#) (DFL-Mora) and [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury). This is effective May 31, 2007.

The single biggest increase in funding is for special education, which received \$1.6 billion for the biennium. The funding is \$223

million more than the House proposed and \$172 million less than the Senate.

In fiscal year 2008, special education aid funding will increase to \$694 million and to \$719 million in fiscal year 2009.

The law creates a special education task force to compare state and federal education requirements and see what, if any, state requirements exceed federal requirements. Those that do could be scaled back to meet the minimum federal requirements to save on funding. By Feb. 15, 2008, the task force must present its findings to the Legislature.

Other funding provisions in the law include:

- \$90 million in one-time technology funding;
- ECFE funding increased to \$42.9 million for the biennium;
- Head Start funding level restored to 2003 levels at \$40.2 million for the biennium;
- \$20 million for school readiness programs;
- \$5.4 million for increased gifted and talented funding;
- \$5.3 million for after-school community grants;
- \$1.25 million in fiscal year 2008 for adult literacy grants for recent immigrants;
- \$500,000 for Mandarin Chinese Project language grants; and
- \$200,000 to help with declining enrollment in Browns Valley.

Equitable funding concerns

The main sticking point for House Republicans was the funding increase disparity for Minneapolis and St. Paul compared with other school districts. Under the new law, Minneapolis will receive a larger increase in its biennial per pupil funding than any other school district. The state’s largest district will receive \$1,416 over the biennium per pupil unit, while other school districts will average \$926.

“The concern of mine in the bill is equity. It happens to stem from the importance of the disparity gap in Minnesota,” said [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon). As an example, he said districts like Cannon Falls will see a \$285 disparity in fiscal year 2008, and the disparity will grow by almost \$1,000 in the second year of the biennium.

Minneapolis will receive more funding due to its large population of limited English

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One big red X

Key provision leads to omnibus tax bill veto

By SONJA HEGMAN

As promised, the omnibus tax bill was vetoed by [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#).

It contained a number of provisions, including tax breaks for expansions of the Mall of America in Bloomington and Thomson West in Eagan, a \$39 million state guarantee for costs associated with the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul and tighter tax rules for companies with foreign operations.

"I am supportive of many of the tax provisions in the bill such as increases in direct property tax relief to homeowners, sales tax exemptions for agriculture products, acceleration of the single sales factor for corporate income tax and the increase for military combat credit," Pawlenty wrote in his [veto message](#).

His problem was with a provision that would have factored inflation into future budget projections. Supporters said it would give a truer description of the state's financial situation. To eliminate it, he would have to veto the entire bill, because line-item vetoes are not allowed for policy provisions. He warned legislators before the bill was passed that the inflation provision could bring down the whole measure.

"When legislators and the Governor assemble the state budget, we shouldn't assume that every program should automatically grow," Pawlenty wrote. "For some programs, increases will be warranted. Other programs, however, may deserve a smaller increase or perhaps no increase at all. Each program should be evaluated on its merits and the overall growth in the budget should reflect that type of approach rather than assuming autopilot increase."

The demise of the bill won't necessarily force a special session. Current tax laws will remain in effect without any changes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#)

(DFL-Bloomington) and [Sen. Tom Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), the final product did not contain a new tax tier for the state's wealthiest residents. Supporters believed it would have helped provide about \$450 million in property tax relief to 90 percent of the state.

But the bill still aimed to ease the impact of rising property taxes, mainly by funneling more state money to lower levels of government.

It also would have:

- given homeowners \$32 million in property tax refunds in the 2008-09 biennium, and \$65 million in 2010-11;
- given local governments an additional \$83 million in state aid in the 2008-09 biennium, and at least \$70 million in 2010-11;
- given disabled veterans an additional \$3.7 million in property tax relief in the 2008-09 biennium, and \$8 million in 2010-11;
- modified existing tax language so that state businesses with foreign operations would pay an additional \$125 million in state taxes in the next two years, and an extra \$182 million in the 2010-11 biennium. The provision was sought by both the House and Senate.

Economic development

The bill included a public financing package for Phase II of the Mall of America. Under the proposal, a metropolitan area-wide levy would have been imposed on the fiscal

disparities pool to help fund construction of a \$180 million, 8,000-stall parking ramp. This would have imposed a very low rate tax on all commercial-industrial property in the seven-county metro area. The pool shares 40 percent of the growth in the commercial-industrial tax base of the seven counties; thereby allowing all cities to share in the region's growth, reduce competition for tax base and spread the benefits of regional public investments.

"I support having the state assist with public infrastructure improvements related to the Mall of America expansion and would encourage the legislature to explore another funding source that will allow the project to move forward," Pawlenty wrote.

In addition, the city of Bloomington would have been authorized to impose several local taxes, revenues of which would have been used to help finance the parking:

- a sales and use tax of up to 1 percent within a special taxing district;
- a lodging tax of up to 1 percent in the city;
- a tax of up to 1 percent on admissions to entertainment and recreational facilities and rental of recreation equipment at sites within a special taxing district; and
- a food and beverage tax of up to 3 percent within a special taxing district.

A tax increment financing district in the bill authorized Bloomington to transfer eight parcels from Phase I of the Mall of America TIF district to the Phase II TIF district. This would have extended the duration limit for collecting tax increments from those parcels by three years.

The city of Eagan would have been authorized to create a tax increment financing district for Thomson West that would have diverted property taxes from the company and expansion to pay for streets, parking, sewer, water and other improvements on the site.

Corporate franchise tax

The bill would have made two changes to the foreign source income provisions of the corporate franchise tax.

The qualifying rules for foreign operating corporations would have been modified to require that the corporation derive 80 percent of its income from active foreign sources. It

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an office. The mission is to provide information and assistance to student veterans or their family members at the school regarding available resources. Pfeffer said the goal isn't for the state to come in and tell a campus what to do or how the office should be run, but to offer help in getting their program going. "Each community has different needs."

Since last August, 35 new centers have been established, serving more than 26,000 individuals.

With the expected return of nearly 3,000 deployed National Guard members later this summer, Pfeffer said the need for these offices is critical. "Many of these returning vets will be taking advantage of their education benefits, and we want to do everything we can to help them succeed."

This year, both the governor and the department proposed the program's expansion. However, a \$900,000 biennial appropriation only made it into the omnibus agriculture and veterans finance bill by amendment, after a nudge from Veterans Affairs Commissioner Clark Dyrud. The bill received overwhelming bipartisan support, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty moved it into law on May 1.

Pfeffer said the appropriation will allow for additional staff to help more campuses get resource centers up and running. He said the cost of running the centers is on the institutions' "own dime, but the staff is there to act as a resource for them."

Talking things though

The need to talk seems to differentiate this returning group of veterans from those

previous, Pfeffer said. "World War II vets rarely talked about their experience, and are only beginning to tell their stories now. Vietnam vets came home, put their uniforms away and felt they couldn't talk about it. But this new group seems to want to talk."

A report concerning the offices' activities presented to the Legislature bears that out. Of the contacts made in 2006, 32 percent of those were for conversation. Don't dismiss the "chit chat" as unimportant, Pfeffer said. It quickly turns to talk about problems and questions about accessing benefits.

Pfeffer sees the need for the offices to continue for some time. "It's not only for the returning soldiers now. We still have more over there. We believe we have a long run."



Development continued from page 29

Minnesota's doing worse than the national average, and this governor took \$35 million out of the jobs and economic development committee."

Housing

The law funnels \$114.56 million into affordable house programs including a \$12.1 million base increase and \$27.5 million in one-time funds.

"Increased funding for affordable housing will allow for construction and redevelopment of affordable housing units across the state," Murphysaid. "It will provide supportive housing for the homeless and prevent foreclosures by increasing prevention assistance."

The Challenge Grant Program, which provides deferred grants and loans to local governments and nonprofit developers to acquire housing units, will receive a \$15 million one-time bump. The Housing Trust Fund, which provides no-interest deferred loans to local governments and public and private organizations to finance

affordable permanent and supportive rental housing and limited equity cooperative housing, receives \$5 million in one-time money and a \$500,000 base bump.

Also funded is a \$7.5 million base increase for family homelessness prevention; a \$2 million base increase for a program that provides rental assistance for households with an income below 50 percent of the area median level, where at least one adult has a persistent and serious mental illness; and a \$1.3 million one-time jolt and \$630,000 base increase for a program that provides deferred loans of up to \$15,000 to low-income homeowners that need to correct health and safety hazards in their home.

Other components of the law include:

- creation of a Packinghouse Workers Bill of Rights;
- a requirement that independent residential and commercial construction contractors need to get a certificate from the [Department of Labor and Industry](#), which would exempt them from having worker's compensation paid on them by an employer;

- enactment of the Safe Patient Handling Act to help prevent on-the-job injuries for nurses and nursing home and hospital workers through the proper use of the patient-lift equipment;
- creation of a new program to assist businesses with gap financing for technology and other improvements;
- an increase in protection for employee whistleblowers;
- an increase in size and duty expansion of the Minnesota Boxing Commission, which will also oversee mixed martial arts competitions;
- requiring retail stores to let people with certain medical conditions, such as Crohn's disease, have access to nonpublic restrooms;
- \$1.3 million for the Minnesota Snowbate program, which helps bring film and television productions to the state; and
- \$150,000 for battle flag preservation by the Minnesota Historical Society.

[HF122](#)*/[SF62](#)/CH135

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

House Public Information Services

175 State Office Building296-2146

Committee Schedule Hotline

175 State Office Building296-9283

Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol296-2314

House Index

211 Capitol296-6646

Senate Information

231 Capitol296-0504

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol296-2344

Voice mail/order bills.....296-2343

Senate Index

110 Capitol296-2887

Committee Hotline, Senate296-8088

College costs continued from page 31

House bill, is not in the final product. "The biggest disappointment from our caucus' perspective is that when we put on the tuition freeze we did it in good faith on a bipartisan vote. ... We hope the boards take a responsible approach on the appropriations that they have to control tuition."

Rukavina said it is tough to control increased costs when the systems are still recovering from the financial hit they took during the state's \$4.5 billion shortfall four years ago. Nonetheless, he expects the new funding to keep tuition increases to less than 4 percent at MnSCU and less than 3 percent for university undergraduates.

"There's no way you could have done better when you have a system that was decimated,


and you're trying to keep students and the systems operative and the grant program going. We don't want Bonehead University. We want MnSCU and the University of Minnesota. That's what we've got in this bill."

Not included in the law was the so-called Dream Act. Instead, the law grants \$3.4 million to seven two-year colleges so they can eliminate nonresident tuition. This will allow children of illegal immigrants, who have previously had to pay nonresident tuition, to pay the lower in-state rates at those colleges. Thirteen MnSCU institutions already charge a flat tuition rate.

Other law provisions include:

- each MnSCU institution is to provide information on personal financial management to students, and the university is requested to do the same;

- no state money can be used for costs related to the early termination of an athletic coach at the University of Minnesota;
- selection of the university's Board of Regents and MnSCU Board of Trustees is altered;
- \$750,000 in one-time money for a clean room at St. Paul College to teach nanotechnology manufacturing;
- \$500,000 to "identify and improve" ways to reduce college textbook costs, including more information from the publishers on revisions between current and former editions, and a possible textbook rental program; and
- \$200,000 for the women's hockey program at Bemidji State University.

[HF1063*/SF1051/CH144](#) 

E-12 continued from page 33

proficiency and special education students and those receiving free and reduced lunch.

"You're robbing St. Peter to pay for St. Paul, and you're robbing Minneota and Marshall to pay Minneapolis," said [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton).

Vetoed items

Pawlenty vetoed four provisions:

- \$4.5 million for the merger of the Hennepin County and Minneapolis library systems that was signed into law elsewhere ([HF1973*/SF1812](#));
- \$500,000 to pay teachers for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification. While he is strongly supportive of meaningful professional development,

Pawlenty believes that the appropriation would serve a limited number of teachers and questioned the cost-effectiveness of the program;

- \$400,000 to establish an Independent Office of Educational Accountability, Pawlenty said that the duties of the office would duplicate those provided by the [Department of Education](#); and
- \$75,000 in fiscal year 2008 to hire an independent contractor to assist the education finance task force authorized in the law. Pawlenty said Education Department and legislative staff are available, making the appropriation unnecessary.


Controversial compromise

Because of no agreement amongst legislative

leaders and the governor on total spending, a conference committee did not meet for the last three weeks of session.

Instead, a bill to change education code language was amended and approved May 14 on the House floor to add money to the funding formula in each year of the biennium in case the original omnibus K-12 education finance bill didn't get out of the conference committee.

With no public hearing, the Senate rules committee amended the bill to include what became the final product, the full Senate approved it and sent it to the House for concurrence. "The other body took over and rewrote the bill in the dark of night and here we are, take it or leave it," said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall).

[HF2245/SFnone/CH146](#) 

Taxes continued from page 34

would replace the present law test that largely focuses on where the property and payroll of the corporation is located.

Also, tax benefits accruing to corporations under the foreign royalty exclusion would have been denied to income from domestic sources, but the rate of exclusion would have been increased from 80 percent to 90 percent.

These changes would have taken effect beginning in tax year 2008.

Other provisions

- kidney dialysis equipment and breast pumps would have been exempt from state sales tax;

- an extra payment of \$500,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 would have been provided to Cook County and Grand Marais for costs related to the Ham Lake fire of 2007;
- the Metropolitan Council would have been permitted to issue up to \$33.6 million of bonds or other debt instruments to fund the regional transit master plan and transit capital improvements;
- local option sales taxes would have been permitted for Bemidji, Clearwater, Cook County, Duluth, North Mankato and Winona;

- a joint legislative subcommittee on sales and use tax would have been created to, in part, examine the revenue productivity and equity implications of the current sales and use tax base and alternative tax bases; and
- Fergus Falls would have received \$200,000 each year to market and promote development and reuse of the Regional Treatment Center campus site.

[HF2268*/SF1933/CH149](#) 

Friday, May 18

HF2503-Jaros (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Lake and river name changes provided.

HF2504-Madore (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Zoological Garden asset preservation funding provided.

HF2505-Haws (DFL)
Finance
Northstar commuter rail extension design funding provided.

HF2506-Seifert (R)
Finance
Transportation, Metropolitan Council and public safety funding provided; driver and vehicle services fees modified; bonds issued; and money appropriated.

HF2507-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
Arden Hills highway interchange improvements funding provided.

HF2508-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
Arden Hills highway interchange improvements funding provided.

HF2509-Cornish (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Obstructing arrest by peace officer using a weapon criminal penalty imposed.

HF2510-Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services
Epilepsy drug substitution by pharmacist without consent prohibited.

HF2511-Koenen (DFL)
Finance
Clara City walking path funding provided.

HF2512-Gottwalt (R)
Taxes
St. Cloud public safety facilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF2513-Mariani (DFL)
Rules & Legislative Administration
Compensation Council provided the authority to establish salaries for legislators, judges and constitutional officers.

HF2514-Rukavina (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Deferred compensation plan restrictions amended.

HF2515-Abeler (R)
E-12 Education
Nutrient analysis of school menus required.

HF2516-Lanning (R)
Finance
Moorhead; Northwestern Minnesota Regional Sports Center construction funding provided.

HF2517-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Finance
Duluth airport terminal facilities funding provided.

HF2518-Huntley (DFL)
Finance
Duluth sanitary sewer overflow facilities funding provided.

HF2519-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Garrison and Kathio Township wastewater collection system funding provided.

HF2520-Jaros (DFL)
Finance
Duluth; Lake Superior Zoo polar bear exhibit expansion funding provided.

HF2521-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Trunk Highway 25 in Pierz reconstruction funding provided.

Saturday, May 19

HF2522-Tschumper (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health care availability and affordability guaranteed, Minnesota Health Care Plan established, report required and money appropriated.

HF2523-Heidgerken (R)
Finance
Sauk Centre veterans facility funding provided.

HF2524-Ward (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Resident student definition expanded to include the spouse and children of a resident veteran for purposes of determining eligibility for state financial aid for higher education.

HF2525-Erickson (R)
Finance
Princeton regional public safety facility funding provided.

HF2526-Madore (DFL)
E-12 Education
Schools required to allow students with a disability who have not competed special instruction and services to attend their high school graduation ceremonies.

HF2527-Moe (DFL)
Finance
Low-carbon fuel standard established to reduce carbon intensity of fuels by 2020, statutory references aligned and money appropriated.

HF2528-Nelson (DFL)
Finance
Public housing rehabilitation funding provided.

HF2529-Seifert (R)
Finance
Transportation, Metropolitan Council and public safety funding provided; fees and accounts modified; and bonds issued.

HF2530-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Maplewood family shelter, affordable housing and residences for seniors funding provided.

HF2531-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Persons prohibited from possessing firearms for reasons of mental health, statutory list amended by cross-referencing federal law, and state agency reporting required.

HF2532-Tschumper (DFL)
Finance
Hokah City Hall renovation funding provided.

HF2533-Tschumper (DFL)
Finance
Chatfield Brass Band Lending Library improvements funding provided.

HF2534-Tschumper (DFL)
Finance
Houston County Historical Society building renovation and addition funding provided.

HF2535-Benson (DFL)
Finance
Long-term homeless supportive housing funding provided.

HF2536-Lanning (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Watershed basin management districts authorized with taxing authority.

HF2537-Anzelc (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Remote-control operation of trains regulated over highway intersections and bridges and near international border.

HF2538-Madore (DFL)
Finance
Dakota County; Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit funding provided.

HF2539-Morgan (DFL)
Finance
Dakota County public safety technology and support center funding provided.

HF2540-Hansen (DFL)
Finance
Dakota County; Robert Street corridor transitway funding provided.

Sunday, May 20

HF2541-Atkins (DFL)
Finance
Ice arena facilities funding provided.

HF2542-Seifert (R)
Finance
Southwest Regional Amateur Sports Facility funding provided.

HF2543-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
Metro North Regional Sports Facility funding provided.

HF2544-Atkins (DFL)
Finance
Inver Grove Heights Veterans Memorial Community Center expansion funding provided.

HF2545-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County bioscience and environmental library funding provided.

HF2546-Atkins (DFL)
Finance
Mississippi River Bridge 5600 between Inver Grove Heights and St. Paul Park renovation funding provided.

HF2547-Laine (DFL)
Finance
Fridley train station funding provided.

Monday, May 21

HF2548-Ozment (R)
Finance
Dakota County; County Road 42 at Trunk Highway 52 interchange reconstruction funding provided.

HF2549-Juhnke (DFL)
Finance
General Railroad Safety Act adopted.

HF2550-Dill (DFL)
Taxes
Income tax rate increased for certain brackets, receipts dedicated for property tax relief and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2551-Erhardt (R)
Taxes
Clothing sales tax exemption repealed, sales tax rate decreased, income tax credit established, local option sales tax rates adjusted and money appropriated.

HF2552-Knuth (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Homeowners associations prohibited from restricting the installation and operation of a solar energy system.

Bills not acted upon in 2007 could come to life in 2008

When the gavel came down on the legislative session at midnight May 21, it didn't put an end to the business of the 85th session.

Minnesota is one of several states operating on a biennium: the first year is used to set the state budget, and the second year is generally used to consider capital investment projects. Unlike the second year, when legislators adjourn sine die, which means "without a day," in the first year a date for return is established. The Legislature is scheduled to reconvene Feb. 12, 2008, at noon.

Of the 2,552 bills introduced in the House and 2,363 in the Senate, only 150 were passed by both bodies and sent to the governor. So, what happened to the remaining 4,765 bills? Some were duplicates, some were folded into other bills, but most are sitting in limbo, waiting for possible action in the 2008 session.

The future of any bill depends upon where it was in the process when session ended:

- Bills on the General Register return to the last standing committee or division where they were acted upon. The rules also apply to any bill up for consideration on the Consent Calendar, Calendar for the Day or the Fiscal Calendar.
- For appointed conference committees that have not submitted a report upon adjournment, the bill returns to the body where it originates and is laid on the table. The conference committee is discharged.
- Bills that passed one body and not the other remain alive for the second year of the biennium. The house that approved the bill in the first year need not repass the bill in the second.

- House files amended by the Senate coming back for concurrence are available to take up when session begins.
- Bills pending before the rules committee of either body return to the standing committee to which the bill was previously referred.
- Bills vetoed by the governor are returned to the body where the bill originated and tabled.
- Bills remaining in standing committees can be taken up in the second year of the biennium in the committee to which they were referred.

For information on how a bill becomes law, go to www.house.mn/hinfo/govser/GOVSER6.pdf or call House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550 and request the Minnesota State Government Series State Law Process.

— L. SCHUTZ

New Laws and their effective dates

Editor's note: The following chart includes the 150 bills that passed both the House and the Senate and were sent to the governor for consideration. The bills are, for the most part, sorted according to the committee of origin. An asterisk marks the version of the bill the House and Senate approved and sent on to the governor.

Here are definitions of some of the terms used in the chart.

Governor's options

• enactment

The date the governor signed the bill into law.

• line-item veto (liv)

The power or action of the governor to reject individual items within an appropriations bill while approving the rest of the bill.

• veto

The governor did not approve the bill.

Effective dates

Each act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day stated in the act itself, unless it specifies a different time. Examples:

• Aug. 1, 2007

Each act the governor signs into law, except those that make appropriations, take effect on Aug. 1 following final enactment, unless the act specifies a different date.

• July 1, 2007

An appropriations act, an act spending money, takes effect at the beginning of the first day of July following its final enactment, unless the act specifies a different date.

• Day after enactment

The act becomes effective the day after the governor signs it.

• Upon local approval

A special law requiring approval from the local government unit it affects becomes effective the day after the local government unit's governing body files a certificate with the secretary of state, unless the act specifies a later date.

• Various

Different parts of the act have different effective dates.

• with exceptions (we)

Act includes other effective dates.

• with qualifications (wq)

Act adds conditions to the effective date.

• retroactive (retro.)

Act goes into effect as of a specified date in the past.

| 2007 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE | | | | | CH | Governor's signature | Effective date |
|--|--------|----|--------|------------|----|----------------------|----------------|
| FINAL ACTION AS OF MAY 31, 2007 | | | | | | | |
| HF—House File SF—Senate File R—Resolution CH—Chapter we—with exceptions wq—with qualifications *—bill the governor signed or vetoed | | | | | | | |
| HF | Author | SF | Author | Bill Title | | | |

| AGRICULTURE | | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|-------|-----------|---|-----|-----------|-----------|
| 274* | Juhnke | 227 | Vickerman | Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided. | 16 | 3/30/2007 | 3/31/2007 |
| 2227* | Juhnke | 1925 | Vickerman | Omnibus agricultural and veterans finance bill. | 45 | 5/4/2007 | various |
| BANKING | | | | | | | |
| 2056 | Atkins | 1920* | Sparks | Financial institutions debt, charges, expenses, electronic terminals and investments regulated. | 44 | 5/4/2007 | various |
| 1758* | Davnie | 1574 | Olson, M. | Financial institutions access cards regulated and security breach liability established. | 108 | 5/21/2007 | various |
| BONDING | | | | | | | |
| 87* | Thao | 257 | Moua | St. Paul Asian Pacific Cultural Center predesign expenditures authorized. | 4 | 3/2/2007 | 3/3/2007 |
| 886* | Hausman | 2157 | Langseth | Omnibus capital investment finance bill. | 38 | vetoed | |
| 2433* | Marquart | 2236 | Langseth | Browns Valley flood relief funding provided, flood mitigation projects authorized and money appropriated. | 122 | 5/23/2007 | 5/24/2007 |
| BUSINESS | | | | | | | |
| 1441* | Simon | 792 | Scheid | Limited purpose trust companies nonsubstantive term changes provided. | 12 | 3/30/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| CONSUMERS | | | | | | | |
| 1364 | Atkins | 1168* | Sparks | Building contractors insurance requirements modified. | 9 | 3/27/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 993 | Norton | 1735* | Higgins | Radon control provisions adoption required relating to building codes. | 40 | 5/4/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 189 | DeLaForest | 372* | Gerlach | Ticket scalping prohibition repealed. | 47 | 5/7/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 512 | Atkins | 69* | Sieben | Gift certificates and gift cards expiration dates and service fees prohibited. | 93 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1013 | Otremba | 112* | Olseen | Body piercing services prohibited for persons under the age of 18 without parental consent. | 98 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1675 | Simon | 1333* | Latz | Car buyers' bill of rights enacted, disclosures required, sale of "certified" used motor vehicles regulated, and cancellation option required on purchase of a used motor vehicle. | 99 | 5/21/2007 | 1/1/2008 |
| 1656 | Thissen | 1262* | Higgins | Lead-containing jewelry products manufacture and sale regulated. | 132 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| CRIME | | | | | | | |
| 455* | Murphy, M. | 300 | Higgins | Public defense provisions updated and clarified, right to representation modified, public defender system supervision provided, chief public appellate defender appointment provided and public defender co-payments statutory language stricken. | 61 | 5/10/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 49 | Lesch | 493* | Moua | Criminal gang activity as public nuisance. | 150 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| DEVELOPMENT | | | | | | | |
| none | none | 2089* | Tomassoni | Omnibus jobs and economic development bill. | 55 | vetoed | |
| 556 | Beard | 218* | Rest | Airport zoning disclosure duties established. | 64 | 5/10/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 122* | Rukavina | 62 | Tomassoni | Omnibus economic development finance bill. | 135 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| 1425 | Holberg | 1499* | Bonoff | Students authorized to participate in high school league-sponsored activities after completing licensed treatment programs. | 7 | 3/20/2007 | 3/21/2007 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| 504 | Hilstrom | 646* | Moua | School board policies prohibiting bullying and intimidation required to address electronic and Internet use. | 53 | 5/9/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 2245* | Greiling | none | none | Omnibus E-12 education finance bill. | 146 | 5/30/2007 | various |
| ELECTIONS | | | | | | | |
| 160* | Hilty | 103 | Higgins | Help America Vote Act account appropriations transfer authorized. | 5 | 3/14/2007 | 3/15/2007 |
| EMPLOYMENT | | | | | | | |
| 966* | Howes | 817 | Anderson | State nurse overtime provisions modified and report required. | 46 | 5/8/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1554 | Atkins | 1495* | Sparks | Payroll card accounts regulation extended. | 87 | 5/18/2007 | 5/19/2007 |
| 287 | Holberg | 221* | Neuville | Employers required to give notice of employee rights relating to personnel record review and access. | 119 | 5/23/2007 | 1/1/2008 |
| 648 | Mahoney | 167* | Sparks | Unemployment insurance policy, housekeeping and style changes provided; rules incorporated into statute; fraud penalties modified; and certain unemployment benefits extended. | 128 | 5/24/2007 | various |

For complete information on new laws passed in 2007, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/NewLaws/NewLawsmain.asp

2007 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

FINAL ACTION AS OF MAY 31, 2007

HF—House File
SF—Senate File
R—Resolution

CH—Chapter
we—with exceptions
wq—with qualifications

*—bill the governor
signed or vetoed

| HF | Author | SF | Author | Bill Title | CH | Governor's signature | Effective date |
|----|--------|----|--------|------------|----|----------------------|----------------|
|----|--------|----|--------|------------|----|----------------------|----------------|

ENERGY

| | | | | | | | |
|------|--------------|-------|----------------|--|-----|-----------|-----------|
| 4 | Peterson, A. | 4* | Anderson | Renewable energy standard established. | 3 | 2/22/2007 | various |
| 472* | Morrow | 239 | Sheran | Renewable energy production incentives eligibility period extended. | 20 | 4/20/2007 | 4/21/2007 |
| 1555 | Simon | 1902* | Olseen | Energy forward pricing mechanisms terms defined. | 68 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 660 | Bly | 563* | Doll | Renewable electric energy development benefits economic strategy required, and Legislative Electric Energy Task Force regulated. | 107 | 5/21/2007 | 5/22/2007 |
| 436 | Hilty | 145* | Prettner Solon | Community-based energy development provided and greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan required. | 136 | 5/25/2007 | various |

ENVIRONMENT

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------------|-------|----------|--|-----|-----------|--|
| 110* | Huntley | 38 | Rest | Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact enacted. | 2 | 2/20/2007 | Upon ratification of states party to the compact and consent by Congress |
| 293* | Tingelstad | 450 | Anderson | Environment and natural resources funding provided, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources meeting requirements modified. | 30 | 5/3/2007 | various |
| 1016 | Hansen | 420* | Saxhaug | Forest pest control measures provided, approved firewood required on land administered by the commissioner of natural resources, and sale and distribution of firewood regulated. | 36 | 5/3/2007 | various |
| 854* | Sailer | 235 | Higgins | Video display device collection, transportation and recycling provided; civil penalties imposed. | 48 | 5/8/2007 | 5/9/2007 |
| 2410 | Wagenius | 2096* | Anderson | Omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill. | 57 | 5/8/2007 | various |
| 849 | Moe | 961* | Skogen | Shoreland resorts regulated. | 92 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1316 | Hortman | 1085* | Marty | Mercury; sale of certain mercury-containing products prohibited; sale, use and disposal restrictions modified; consumer information required; and lamp recycling facility operation requirements modified. | 109 | 5/21/2007 | various |

FAMILY

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|------------|-------|-----------|---|-----|-----------|----------|
| 1400 | Tingelstad | 358* | Olson, M. | Adoption information assistance provided to genetic siblings. | 49 | 5/8/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1500 | Smith | 1271* | Neuville | Child support laws clarified and modified, enforcement provisions modified and time periods extended for enforcing child support judgments. | 118 | 5/24/2007 | various |
| 1396* | Madore | 795 | Olson, M. | Guardianship and conservatorship recommendations study required. | 126 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |

GAMBLING

| | | | | | | | |
|------|--------|-------|------|---|-----|-----------|---------|
| 1691 | Anzelc | 1966* | Rest | Lawful gambling provisions modifications. | 145 | 5/25/2007 | various |
|------|--------|-------|------|---|-----|-----------|---------|

GAME & FISH

| | | | | | | | |
|------|------|-------|------|------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|
| 1021 | Dill | 1131* | Bakk | Omnibus game, fish and lands bill. | 131 | 5/25/2007 | various |
|------|------|-------|------|------------------------------------|-----|-----------|---------|

GOVERNMENT

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|----------|-------|---------|---|----|-----------|-----------|
| 1678 | Johnson | 1294* | Olseen | Public Utilities Commission electronic filing authorized. | 10 | 3/27/2007 | various |
| 1200* | Kranz | 983 | Moua | Revisor's bill. | 13 | 3/30/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 878* | Doty | 1263 | Gimse | Board of Animal Health consultants expanded to include the commissioner of agriculture. | 19 | 4/20/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 2135 | Loeffler | 1949* | Rest | Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission duties, powers and procedures modified. | 29 | 5/3/2007 | 5/4/2007 |
| 958 | Solberg | 846* | Cohen | State agencies deficiency funding provided. | 32 | 5/2/2007 | 5/3/2007 |
| 1294 | Berns | 1483* | Lourey | Minnesota Council on Disability sunset repealed. | 33 | 5/3/2007 | 5/4/2007 |
| 1267 | Morgan | 1236* | Michel | State employees technical and housekeeping changes provided. | 35 | 5/3/2007 | various |
| 465 | Kranz | 321* | Betzold | Independent nonprofit firefighting corporations included for joint exercise of powers agreements. | 43 | 5/4/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 953 | Kahn | 1997* | Betzold | State government funding provided, state and local operations regulated, public employment provisions modified, Department of Employee Relations abolished. | 56 | vetoed | |
| 1598 | Lillie | 1073* | Scheid | State labor agreements and compensation plans ratified. | 63 | 5/10/2007 | 5/11/2007 |
| 1493 | Simon | 2030* | Gerlach | Surplus property rulemaking authority provided. | 67 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |

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2007 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

FINAL ACTION AS OF MAY 31, 2007

HF—House File
SF—Senate File
R—Resolution

CH—Chapter
we—with exceptions
wq—with qualifications

*—bill the governor
signed or vetoed

| HF | Author | SF | Author | Bill Title | CH | Governor's signature | Effective date |
|---------------|--------------|-------|----------------|---|-----|----------------------|----------------|
| 1339 | Poppe | 1557* | Larson | State government record retention provision deleted. | 76 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1034 | Peterson, A. | 538* | Kubly | Heating and cooling policy established for building projects funded with state appropriations. | 77 | 5/17/2007 | 7/1/2007 |
| 1486 | Pelowski | 1755* | Rest | Charitable organizations authorized to participate in joint powers agreements. | 83 | 5/17/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1549 | Johnson | 1019* | Rummel | Public Utilities Commission ex parte rules technical changes provided. | 88 | 5/18/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 203 | Mariani | 118* | Pappas | Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board expanded to include legislators as nonvoting members. | 94 | 5/21/2007 | 5/22/2007 |
| 790 | Moe | 1186* | Frederickson | Minnesota Public Facilities Authority Act and Pollution Control Agency project priority rule modified. | 96 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1688 | Pelowski | 1556* | Larson | Office of Enterprise Technology terminology modified. | 100 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1957 | Bigham | 1597* | Rest | State employee combined charities registration process for organization participation streamlined. | 101 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1303 | Walti | 1165* | Olseen | Meetings by telephone or other electronic means under certain conditions authorized. | 110 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1710 | Hilty | 2226* | Vickerman | Private cemeteries provisions clarified. | 115 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1332 | Clark | 1075* | Pappas | State Board of Investment required to divest from certain investments related to Sudan. | 117 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 144 | Hortman | 463* | Betzold | Notary public maximum fees increased. | 127 | vetoed | |
| 1360 | Simon | 596* | Olson, M. | Data practices duties and classifications clarified, technical changes provided and access and classifications provided. | 129 | 5/24/2007 | various |
| 1051 | Hilty | 1048* | Lourey | Indian Affairs Council membership and other provisions modified. | 130 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1340 | Tingelstad | 1377* | Rest | State boards and advisory groups governing laws revised. | 133 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 2293* | Ozment | 2044 | Latz | Claims against the state settlement provided relating to corrections. | 137 | 5/24/2007 | 5/25/2007 |
| 1175* | Murphy, M. | 962 | Prettner Solon | Aircraft facilities state financing modified to allow flexibility in obtaining a new lessee for a facility, and other statutory provisions modified. | 138 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1208* | Mahoney | 998 | Scheid | Construction code and licensing provisions modified, penalties and enforcement provided, statutes recodified and money appropriated. | 140 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| 548* | Simon | 471 | Betzold | Omnibus state government finance bill. | 148 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| HEALTH | | | | | | | |
| 2090* | Ward | 2111 | Koering | Backflow prevention in recreational camping areas requirements limited. | 24 | 4/30/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1444 | Bigham | 1105* | Sieben | Health risk limits and reporting required for certain perfluorochemicals. | 37 | 5/3/2007 | 5/4/2007 |
| 1990 | Ruud | 1790* | Hann | Adverse health care events reporting provisions modified. | 41 | 5/4/2007 | 10/7/2007 |
| 1442 | Slawik | 1266* | Pappas | Hospital emergency rooms required to provide emergency contraception, prophylactic antibiotics and information to sexual assault victims. | 42 | 5/4/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 918 | Norton | 555* | Berglin | Essential community provider designation extended. | 50 | 5/8/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 297 | Huntley | 2171* | Berglin | Omnibus health and human services finance bill. | 58 | vetoed | |
| 633 | Sertich | 805* | Tomassoni | Health plan coverage for hearing aids requirements modified. | 60 | 5/10/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1287 | Davnie | 1705* | Sparks | Colorectal screening tests insurance coverage required. | 66 | 5/14/2007 | 5/15/2007 |
| 305 | Huntley | 238* | Sheran | Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007; secondhand smoke hazard public policy established to protect employees and the general public. | 82 | 5/16/2007 | 10/1/2007 |
| 1582 | Norton | 1215* | Fischbach | Health department technical changes provided, radioactive material license renewal fee eliminated, radiation-producing equipment fees established, x-ray equipment operation requirements modified. | 85 | 5/18/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1984 | Huntley | 1959* | Erickson Ropes | County corrections return of unused drugs dispensed by pharmacies authorized. | 103 | 5/21/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1072 | Liebling | 802* | Koering | Mortuary science provisions modified. | 114 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1074 | Ruud | 883* | Scheid | Darlene Luther Revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act adopted and penalties imposed. | 120 | 5/24/2007 | 4/1/2008 |
| 57 | Thao | 26* | Marty | Board of Medical Practices' advisory councils expiration dates extended. | 123 | 5/24/2007 | various |
| 1409* | Gottwalt | 1229 | Koering | Well contractor's license provisions modified. | 124 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 298 | Huntley | 184* | Marty | Registered nurses authorized to dispense oral contraceptives in family planning clinics; governmental unit definition expanded; medical assistance reimbursement rates adjustment provided. | 139 | 5/25/2007 | 8/1/2007 |

For complete information on new laws passed in 2007, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/NewLaws/NewLawsmain.asp

| 2007 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE | | | | | CH | Governor's signature | Effective date |
|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--|-----|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| FINAL ACTION AS OF MAY 31, 2007 | | | | | | | |
| HF—House File SF—Senate File R—Resolution | | | | | | | |
| CH—Chapter we—with exceptions wq—with qualifications | | | | | | | |
| *—bill the governor signed or vetoed | | | | | | | |
| HF | Author | SF | Author | Bill Title | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 1078* | Huntley | 967 | Berglin | Omnibus health and human services finance bill. | 147 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| 797 | Rukavina | 1989* | Pappas | Omnibus higher education funding bill. | 65 | vetoed | |
| 1063* | Simon | 1051 | Pappas | Omnibus higher education finance bill | 144 | 5/30/2007 | 7/1/2007 |
| HOUSING | | | | | | | |
| 1004* | Davnie | 809 | Higgins | Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited. | 18 | 4/20/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 931 | Mullery | 988* | Higgins | Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited, criminal penalties prescribed and remedies provided. | 74 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 211 | Zellers | 241* | Limmer | Mortgage loan application information sale prohibited, homestead exemptions and judgments involving sale of home- stead property enforcement regulated and real property improvement construction damage actions limited. | 105 | 5/21/2007 | various |
| 1209 | Mullery | 1533* | Pappas | Homeowner transactions regulated relating to homes in foreclosure. | 106 | 5/21/2007 | various |
| 1205 | Kranz | 1196* | Jungbauer | Manufactured home relocation trust fund established, and manufactured home park owner payments required. | 141 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| HUMAN SERVICES | | | | | | | |
| 738 | Greiling | 322* | Betzold | Civil commitment early intervention services expanded, and definition of chemically dependent person expanded. | 69 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1577 | Lesch | 1724* | Prettner Solon | Human services licensing and other provisions modified. | 112 | 5/24/2007 | various |
| INDUSTRY | | | | | | | |
| 1300 | Juhnke | 1069* | Skoe | Motor fuels unavailability notice required, and penalty waiver provided for retailers who do not carry ethanol or biodiesel blends under certain circumstances. | 28 | 4/30/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 2045 | Atkins | 1193* | Johnson | Petroleum products specifications updated and petroleum definitions modified. | 62 | 5/10/2007 | various |
| 1958 | Atkins | 1070* | Pappas | Liquor regulations modified and intoxicating liquor licenses authorized. | 89 | 5/18/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| INSURANCE | | | | | | | |
| 448* | Mullery | 1912 | Senjem | Auto insurance verification mailing program repealed. | 22 | 4/26/2007 | various |
| 1865 | Poppe | 1787* | Latz | Workers' compensation coverage federal exclusions information and report required. | 39 | 5/4/2007 | 5/5/2007 |
| 1712 | Masin | 744* | Sparks | Rental vehicle insurance coverage regulated. | 72 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 772 | Paymar | 608* | Prettner Solon | Aircraft insurance minimum liability limits increased. | 79 | 5/17/2007 | various |
| 1949 | Atkins | 1542* | Scheid | Insurer conduct regulated in collision cases. | 80 | 5/17/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1892 | Atkins | 1581* | Scheid | Life insurance continuation coverage regulated, mortality tables authorized to calculate reserves for certain policies, and other insurance provisions modified and regulated. | 104 | 5/21/2007 | various |
| 464* | Sertich | 276 | Betzold | School employee statewide health insurance plan established. | 142 | vetoed | |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT | | | | | | | |
| 935 | Scalze | 736* | Lynch | Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed Minnesota Inter-county Association. | 6 | 3/21/2007 | 3/22/2007 |
| 1429 | Urdahl | 1332* | Dille | Meeker County economic development authority membership increased to nine. | 15 | 3/30/2007 | Day following local compliance |
| 1432 | Huntley | 1133* | Tomassoni | St. Louis County civil service director provisions modified. | 17 | 4/20/2007 | 4/21/2007 |
| 1490* | Beard | 1419 | Robling | Scott County personnel rules adoption authorized and veterans' preference administration provided. | 25 | 4/30/2007 | Upon local approval |
| 1193 | Sailer | 1098* | Skoe | Beltrami County; county recorder appointment process provided. | 26 | 4/30/2007 | Day after local compliance |
| 1105 | Laine | 1017* | Rest | Charter commission expense limitations increased for specified cities. | 27 | vetoed | |
| 1872 | Thissen | 1807* | Larson | Hennepin County conflicts of interest regulated for certain Hennepin Healthcare System personnel. | 34 | 5/3/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 269 | Howes | 124* | Olson, M. | County office vacancy procedures modified. | 52 | 5/9/2007 | 5/10/2007 |
| 905 | Scalze | 1311* | Lourey | Municipal preventive health services programs authorized. | 59 | 5/10/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1708 | Peterson, N. | 1509* | Rest | Hennepin County design-build contract provisions modified. | 70 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1919 | Marquart | 2161* | Prettner Solon | Plats of land provided. | 73 | 5/14/2007 | 8/1/2007 |

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2007 MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

FINAL ACTION AS OF MAY 31, 2007

HF—House File
SF—Senate File
R—Resolution

CH—Chapter
we—with exceptions
wq—with qualifications

*—bill the governor
signed or vetoed

| HF | Author | SF | Author | Bill Title | CH | Governor's signature | Effective date |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|--|-----|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 756 | Doty | 585* | Koering | National Register of Historic Places property sale or lease restrictions removed. | 75 | 5/15/2007 | 5/16/2007 |
| 1161 | Kohls | 1045* | Ortman | Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority renamed Scott County Community Development Agency. | 78 | 5/17/2007 | Day following local approval |
| 267 | Olson | 303* | Wergin | Municipal boundary adjustment advisory task force extended. | 90 | 5/21/2007 | various |
| 180 | Sertich | 54* | Tomassoni | Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency dissolved, and assets and liabilities transferred to the Hibbing Economic Development Authority. | 91 | 5/21/2007 | Day following local compliance |
| 531 | Beard | 547* | Ortman | Scott County library board made advisory to the county board. | 97 | 5/21/2007 | Day following local compliance |
| 1141 | Emmer | 837* | Koch | Hennepin and Wright county boards authorized to initiate a process for the change of county boundaries by resolution. | 102 | 5/21/2007 | 5/22/2007 |
| 1629 | Hilstrom | 1396* | Wergin | Fair market value determination clarified in certain dedication proceedings. | 116 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1973* | Carlson | 1812 | Rest | Minneapolis Public Library and Hennepin County library system merger enabled. | 121 | 5/24/2007 | Day following local approval filing |
| 2223 | Abeler | 2043* | Jungbauer | Anoka authorized in its home rule charter to provide the procedure for the appointment of the city housing and redevelopment authority commissioners. | 125 | 5/24/2007 | Day following local compliance |
| METRO AFFAIRS | | | | | | | |
| 881* | Hilstrom | 981 | Rest | Metropolitan Land Planning Act and related statutes modified and erroneous and obsolete references corrected. | 31 | vetoed | |
| 882 | Hilstrom | 1302* | Pappas | Metropolitan livable communities fund provisions modified, nonprofit organization creation and funds use authorized. | 113 | 5/23/2007 | 5/24/2007 |
| MILITARY | | | | | | | |
| 1594* | Hosch | 952 | Lynch | National Guard reenlistment bonus program expanded and academic awards provided. | 21 | 4/26/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 272* | Haws | 699 | Skogen | Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service. | 51 | 5/9/2007 | 5/10/2007 |
| 1157 | Haws | 1675* | Lourey | Minnesota "Support Our Troops" account money uses expanded. | 86 | 5/18/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 532* | Winkler | 409 | Erickson Ropes | Military personnel utility and other contracts regulated, and cancellations authorized. | 111 | 5/23/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| RETIREMENT | | | | | | | |
| 163 | Huntley | 60* | Prettner Solon | Duluth postemployment benefits accounts authorized and money appropriated. | 14 | 3/30/2007 | Day following local approval |
| 1978 | Murphy, M. | 430* | Betzold | Omnibus pension bill. | 134 | 5/25/2007 | various |
| SAFETY | | | | | | | |
| 1008* | Johnson | 985 | Moua | Child placement background check requirements modified. | 8 | 3/27/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 736* | Huntley | 636 | Metzen | Ambulance service personnel longevity award and incentive program renamed the Cooper/Sams volunteer ambulance program. | 11 | 3/30/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 829* | Paymar | 650 | Higgins | Omnibus public safety finance bill. | 54 | 5/7/2007 | various |
| 1704 | Tillberry | 1464* | Skogen | Motor vehicle collision repair required to include air bag repair or replacement and criminal penalties imposed. | 71 | 5/15/2007 | 8/1/2007 |
| 1824 | Faust | 1370* | Marty | Amusement rides regulation provisions modified. | 95 | 5/21/2007 | 1/1/2008 |
| TAXES | | | | | | | |
| 8* | Wollschlager | 17 | Bakk | Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006. | 1 | 1/30/2007 | various |
| 2294* | Dill | 2003 | Bakk | Omnibus tax bill. | 81 | vetoed | |
| 2268* | Lenczewski | 1933 | Bakk | Omnibus tax bill. | 149 | vetoed | |
| TRANSPORTATION | | | | | | | |
| 539* | Juhnke | 600 | Gimse | Trunk highway Route No. 145 technical correction provided, and Legislative Route No. 262 removed. | 23 | 4/26/2007 | 4/27/2007 |
| 946* | Lieder | 1986 | Murphy | Omnibus transportation finance bill. | 84 | vetoed | |
| 562* | Lieder | 360 | Murphy | Transportation, Metropolitan Council and public safety funding provided; motor vehicle sales tax provisions modified; Public Safety Department fees increased. | 143 | 5/30/2007 | 7/1/2007 |

For complete information on new laws passed in 2007, go to www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/NewLaws/NewLawsmain.asp

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
175 STATE OFFICE BUILDING
100 REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.
ST. PAUL, MN 55155-1298

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER

MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH

MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

2007 session

| | |
|--|----------|
| House files introduced during the 2007 session | 2,552 |
| In 2005 | 2,562 |
| In 2003 | 1,658 |
| Senate files introduced during the 2007 session | 2,363 |
| In 2005 | 2,340 |
| In 2003 | 1,568 |
| Bills sent to the governor in 2007 | 150 |
| In 2005 | 169 |
| In 2003 | 133 |
| Bills signed into law this year | 138 |
| Number that had line-item vetoes | 7 |
| Pages in the longest finance law (health and human services) | 526 |
| Number of full gubernatorial vetoes in 2007 | 12 |
| In the five years Tim Pawlenty has been governor | 28 |
| In the four years Jesse Ventura was governor | 54 |
| When Arne Carlson was governor (1991-98) | 179 |
| When Rudy Perpich was governor (1983-90) | 20 |
| Gubernatorial vetoes since 1939 | 439 |
| Maximum number of legislative days that lawmakers can meet in regular session during the biennium | 120 |
| Number used in 2007 | 75 |
| In 2005 | 66 |
| In 2003 | 59 |
| Pages in the 2007 House Journal | 7,576 |
| In 2005 regular session | 5,038 |
| In 2003 regular session | 4,424 |
| Member's annual salary | \$31,140 |
| House member per diem | \$76 |
| In 2006 | \$66 |
| In 2004 | \$56 |
| Senate member per diem in 2007 | \$96 |
| In 2006 | \$66 |
| Time lawmakers are scheduled to reconvene Feb. 12, 2008 | noon |
| Days between the May 21 House adjournment and when legislators reconvene | 267 |

Sources: House Public Information Services; Legislature Web site (www.leg.mn); Governor's Log 2007; Journal of the House; Journal of the Senate.

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SESSION WEEKLY

Interim Update

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
August 17, 2007

GET STATE FAIR POLL RESULTS

Results from the Minnesota House of Representatives' state fair poll are scheduled to be on the House Web site, www.house.mn, Sept. 4. Results from previous state fair polls are available online at <http://www.house.mn/hinfo/Fair/pollmain.asp>.

Bridge collapse reaction

Members question costs, design of potential replacement

By Mike Cook

House and Senate transportation committee members sounded a cautionary note Aug. 15 as they viewed the preliminary [reconstruction plan](#) for replacement of the Interstate 35W bridge, which collapsed Aug. 1.

Five construction teams have been invited to submit their own designs for a new 10-lane bridge, with a goal of having the new span open by the end of 2008. Awarding of the project could take place in September.

Some committee members questioned whether the timetable was too aggressive and coming at the expense of exploring other options. The absence of any plans for light rail concerned others.

[Department of Transportation](#) officials said

that \$250 million in federal funds awarded to the state are [for a replacement bridge](#), not an enhanced one.

It was noted that additional features, such as room for light rail, could be included at state expense, which at least one constitutional officer does not support.

In an [Aug. 10 letter](#) to [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#), Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau, who doubles as transportation commissioner, wrote along with Metropolitan Council Chairman Peter Bell, that the "inherent disadvantages of including LRT do not justify the expense and delays that would result from further study." They said a study would take at least six weeks, and up to two years of additional review would be required. The department also believes it

would be more cost effective to "reinforce or rebuild the Washington Avenue bridge, or build a stand-alone LRT river-crossing, than to add an LRT component to the I-35W bridge."

[Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) was among members questioning the process. "I'm concerned that the amount of money available is driving what we're considering. My concern is we're doing this backwards. ... If it's an unbearable cost we can scale it back."

However, Deputy Transportation Commissioner Lisa Freese said money may not be the most important reconstruction driver.

"It's a schedule issue. We could slow this down for a month or two, and we could probably still complete the bridge fairly quickly. But when we start talking about some of the major betterments that people are contemplating, we kick in a much more extensive environmental process — a process that typically takes us 18 months to three years to complete." Federal officials have indicated that an increased foundation size would likely result in a longer assessment process.

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) noted the longer it takes to reconstruct the span, not only will costs increase because of inflation, but the more it hurts commerce. She said the main north-south artery through the region is gone, and semi-trucks are not permitted on a portion of Interstate 35E in St. Paul.

Abby McKenzie, transportation program director of the department's [Office of Investment Management](#), said the department is working with the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#) to determine the economic results of the collapse. She believes it's costing about \$400,000 each day in lost time and increased vehicle operation. Study results are expected in early- to mid-September.

Members are scheduled to meet again Aug. 22.

To watch the meeting, go to www.house.mn/hvt/archivesall.asp?ls_year=85.

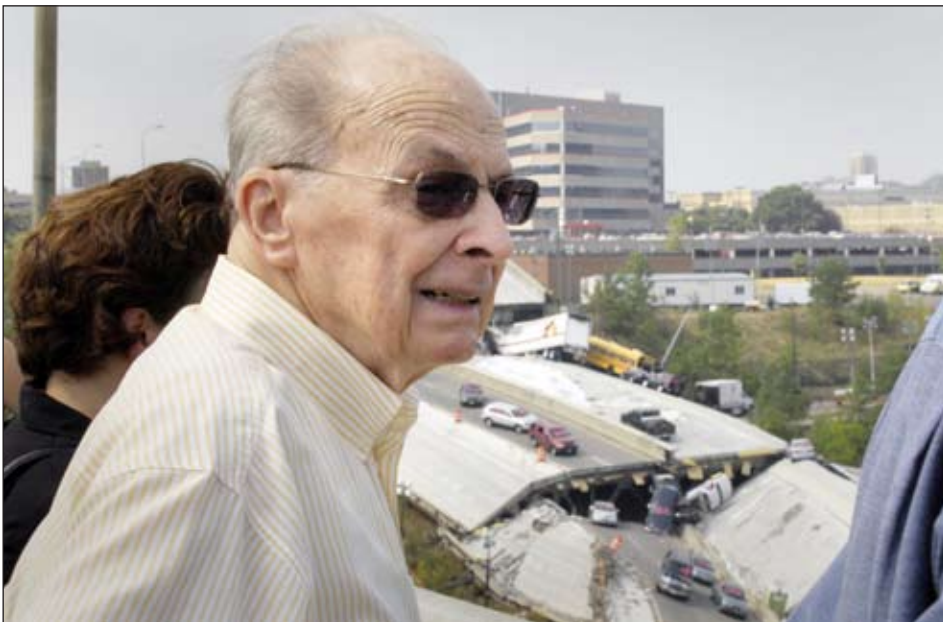


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Bernie Lieder, chairman of the House Transportation Finance Division, and Rep. Shelley Madore were two of the legislators who got a firsthand look at the Interstate 35W bridge wreckage during an Aug. 6 tour. Members also saw the destruction from ground level.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

A firsthand look

The meeting came nine days after committee members and legislative leadership got an up-close look at the collapse.

Standing in a secure area about 100 feet from the northern section of the bridge, and about 30 feet up from the river, a number of legislators' eyes were visibly reddened as they looked at the masses of steel and concrete in front, behind and almost above them. Five days after the incident, the site remained eerily quiet.

"It's important and necessary to see the destruction. To see the structure and the failure, it's..." [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) said after the tour, before pausing. "It's hard to put into words."

With the bridge collapse leading to questions about the state's infrastructure, some legislators expect a special session to be called this fall to address transportation funding. Now that Pawlenty has expressed his openness to the idea, a gas tax increase could be on the table. Pawlenty vetoed the transportation finance bill, which included a 7.5-cent increase, during this year's regular session.

"Some people will say no to everything, but they'll be in serious trouble if they don't align with the people," [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina), vice chairman of the House Transportation Finance Division, said after the tour. At the

meeting he asked about a special session date, but there was no response.

A 16-member joint legislative committee has also been created to investigate the collapse. It is to look at MnDOT policies and practices and department decision-making in response to bridge inspection reports.

"Early on, we promised Minnesotans we would find out why this bridge collapsed," [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) said in an Aug. 14 press release. "It is vital that we answer that question to help restore the public's confidence in our transportation system."

HIGHLIGHTS

MAY 21 - AUG. 16, 2007

GOVERNMENT

Capitol renovation plans

It could be back to the drawing board for the most recent State Capitol renovation plan that calls for \$260 million to help restore and enhance the building that opened in 1905.

The latest draft plan, although only 55 percent complete at a cost of nearly \$1.2 million, appears to have hit the skids, and a [Capitol Restoration Working Group](#) is charged with deciding where to go from here.

Commissioned in 2005, the plan is seen as problematic not only because of its hefty price tag, but also the process used for its development — a process that has put the Senate and the House at odds.

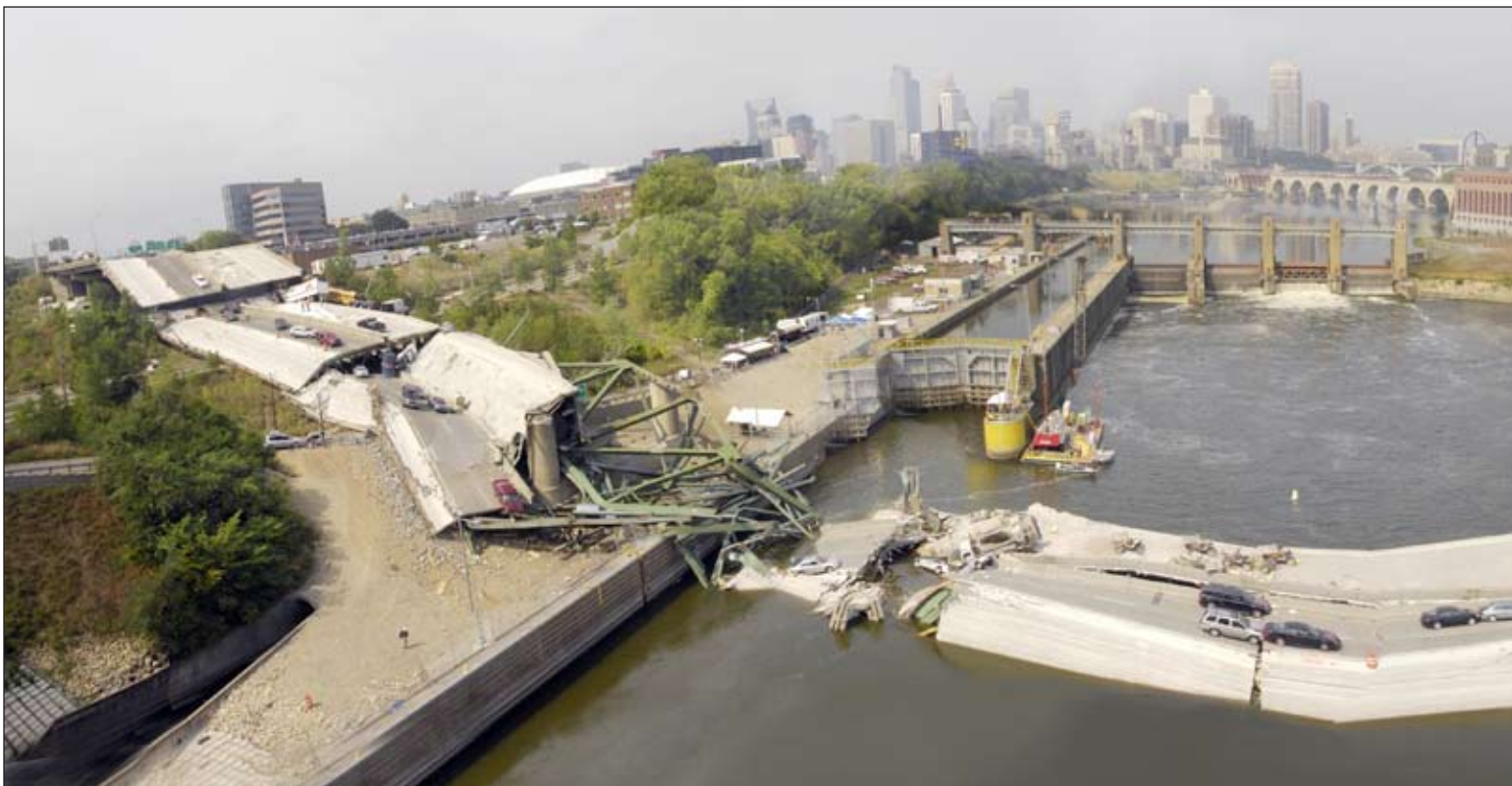
"It's the big price tag," said [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul), who co-chairs

the group with [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon). "You have to ask if there are other priorities that are equally as competing before we rush to spend [this amount of money]."

As plans emerged, House members felt that body had been left out of the planning process, and that the Senate would benefit most from the project. "We resisted when it appeared that we were putting a lot of money into offices and hearing rooms for one chamber," Hausman told the working group.

In an effort to resolve the differences, the Legislature appropriated \$250,000 in 2007 for a working group to consider the plan's future and if other strategies should be looked at for the needed upgrades to the building and other Capitol Complex planning issues.

With a leaking roof, security concerns, rising energy costs and infrastructure unable to handle new technology demands, some



To replace the structure that collapsed Aug. 1, Gov. Tim Pawlenty and other state officials hope to have a new Interstate 35W bridge open in Minneapolis by the end of the year.

say there is little time to waste. But the question is how much. And, with the need for more parking and office space throughout the complex, should the plans take into consideration the whole Capitol Complex?

During its first meeting Aug 3, the 20-member group, made up of legislators, administration officials and members of the public, was candid on what they see as wrong with the current schematic, and the issues that need to be addressed if there is to be ultimate consensus on a plan.

A Sept. 30 deadline looms for the group's recommendations to the Legislature on how to proceed.

No future meeting date was set.

To view the meeting video, go www.house.mn/hvt/archivesall.asp?ls_year=85

— L. SCHUTZ

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Health care reform

A member of the "Gang of Seven" who led a bipartisan effort to consensus on health care reform in the early 1990s gave support to legislators hoping their efforts will lead to health care reform in 2008.

"This is a long suffering experience you

are starting," former Sen. Duane Benson (R-Lanesboro) told the [Legislative Commission on Health Care Access](#) Aug. 15.

"You may not see it in '08 or '09, but it may happen in '10. The only way you'll fail is if you quit," he said.

Chaired by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), the 10-member commission that oversees implementation of the MinnesotaCare law, has been charged with making recommendations to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2008, on how to achieve the goal of universal health coverage for all Minnesotans.

Since July, seven working groups comprised of legislators, members of the business community and organizations interested in health care reform have been meeting to address cost containment strategies, public health initiatives, insurance market reform, health care for long-term care workers and single payer health care issues.

During the commission's organizational meeting in July, Tom Forsythe, vice president of corporate communication for General Mills Inc., was among the panelists calling for systemic reform. Calling health care the "defining issue of our generation," he said, "We believe that we need universal coverage — we support and endorse it, but not in a system that is broken."



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Health care is more than just a visit to the doctor's office or the emergency room, panelists said, adding that a more holistic, systemic approach is essential if the state is serious about containing rising health care costs.

Subcommittees have scheduled meetings through August, and the full commission is expected to meet again Sept. 5.

To view meeting video, go to www.house.mn/hvt/archivesall.asp?ls_year=85

— L. SCHUTZ



STITCHED PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREW VONBANK

of 2008. However, some legislators are concerned the reconstruction plan is too fast and does not address all possible alternatives, including room for light rail.

Low poverty numbers are concerning

Minnesota has one of the lowest poverty rates in the nation, but the numbers are somewhat deceiving.

Such was the message shared Aug. 2 with the [Legislative Commission to End Poverty in Minnesota by 2020](#).

According to a 2005 [American Community Survey](#), 9.2 percent of Minnesotans live below the federal poverty line, the fifth-lowest mark in the country. The national average is 13.3 percent. However, if the state had the ethnic makeup akin to other states, the percent of people in poverty would be 12.4 percent. State Economist Tom Stinson said 2006 survey results are expected by the end of the month.

State Demographer Tom Gillaspay said the 19 percent poverty rate in Minneapolis and St. Paul puts those cities on par with Louisiana and the District of Columbia. The rate is 13 percent in northern Minnesota, 11 percent in the northwest area and 4 percent in the suburban and exurban rings.

According to a June 2007 [report](#) by the JOBS NOW Coalition, a group of 115 religious, labor, business and community organizations, in a family of three with both parents working,

each worker would have needed to earn at least \$10.14 per hour in 2006 to meet the costs of basic family needs; \$12.24 for a family of four. However, 37 percent of Minnesota jobs pay less than \$12.24 per hour; 26 percent pay less than \$10.14 per hour.

While job creation is one avenue the commission is expected to look at, [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji) noted that even low paying jobs in Greater Minnesota can often have hundreds of applicants.

In the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, a family of four where both parents work, would need about \$55,000 annually to meet basic needs, which breaks down to about \$13.19 per hour for each worker, but 35 percent of jobs pay less than that. The average hourly wage for the same family in Greater Minnesota to meet basic needs is \$10.58, a figure that is not met by 36 percent of jobs.

Created by a [2006 law](#), the commission is to study public policy strategies to end poverty in the state by 2020. A final report is due to the Legislature by Dec. 15, 2008. An interim report is scheduled to be available for the 2008 Legislature.

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For information on any meetings scheduled during the interim, go www.house.mn/hinfo/hinfo-sched.asp. To subscribe to the house schedule electronic mailing list go to www.house.mn/list/join.asp?listname=houseschedule.

"Members should open their eyes to new ideas," said former Sen. John Hottinger (DFL-St. Peter), who sponsored the law with [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka), a commission member.

In addition to the overview meeting, the commission is tentatively [scheduled](#) to have nine listening sessions across the state between Sept. 27 and Jan. 10, 2008.

The meeting can be viewed at www.house.mn/htv/archivesall.asp?ls_year=85.

— M. Cook



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert, left, applauds as Supreme Court Justice Lorie Skjervén Gildea, second from left, congratulates the House's newest member, Rep. Steve Drazkowski, during ceremonies in the chamber Aug. 16. Rep. Drazkowski, center, was joined by his wife Laura, second from right, and daughter Kinsey, right, for the swearing-in. Drazkowski replaces Rep. Steve Sviggum who was appointed labor and industry commissioner.

SESSION WEEKLY

Interim Update

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SESSION WEEKLY

Interim Update

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

September 12, 2007

Disaster relief package enacted

More than \$150 million to help flooded areas of southeast Minnesota

By Mike Cook

State relief is on the way for folks like Nancy Benson.

She and her husband have lived in Rushford for decades; she serves on the city council and owns a small beauty shop in town.

"On Saturday night, Aug. 18, they lost everything," said [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent). "The Rush Creek came out right next to their home, flooded their home. Nancy almost died when the basement caved in as it was flooding. Luckily, her husband pulled her out. Her beauty parlor business was completely flooded. They lost everything there. When they

went to see FEMA about 10 days ago they were told, because they had their home paid for, they would get zero help from FEMA."

Less than a month after heavy rains resulted in rushing floodwaters that created a path of destruction through parts of southeast Minnesota, state lawmakers approved a stream of money to help people like Benson rebuild what was damaged or washed away.

The \$157.3 million law, sponsored by Tschumper and [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), includes state aid to seven counties that were [designated federal disaster areas](#) following the Aug. 18-19 storms.

Seven people were killed, nearly 1,500

homes were damaged and approximately 300 destroyed during the flooding. According to the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#), the flooding has resulted in approximately \$67 million in damage to private property and public infrastructure. However, Erickson Ropes said local officials have said that number is only a preliminary estimate.

Approved [130-0](#) by the House just after midnight Sept. 12, and 62-1 by the Senate less than an hour later, the legislation was [signed](#) by [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) in the wee hours of the morning. The law is effective Sept. 13, 2007.

"Providing relief to those communities, families and businesses suffering as a result of the flooding in southeast Minnesota is in the best tradition of Minnesota government acting in response to natural disasters," Pawlenty said. "This package will work in conjunction with efforts already being coordinated by federal and local governments, as well as the private sector to ensure the quickest possible return to normalcy for residents in the impacted communities."

[SSHF1*](#)/[SSSF1](#) provides \$72.3 million of state assistance from the General Fund and \$56 million in general obligation bonding. It also includes \$1 million from the petroleum tank cleanup fund.

The allocations will assist with homeowner and business clean up; the refurbishing or rebuilding of public infrastructure, including roads and bridges; school facilities cleanup,

Continued on page 2



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Ken Tschumper, left, gives a sigh of relief while Rep. Gene Pelowski organizes his paperwork after the House Finance Committee passed the flood relief bill.

repair or replacement; increased student transportation costs; student enrollment changes; replacing state facilities and restoration of natural resources; and help with historic structure cleanup and repair.

“Together, our efforts will foster that cooperative spirit that makes us Minnesotans,” said [Rep. Steve Drazkowski](#) (R-Wabasha). “The citizens of southeast Minnesota are grateful for our collective action and support of this measure.”

The law includes:

- \$51 million to replace roads and bridges;
- \$45 million for employment and economic development purposes;
- \$16 million in low-interest and forgivable loans to homeowners through the [Economic Development and Housing Challenge Program](#) administered by the [Minnesota Housing Finance Agency](#);
- \$4.2 million to repair and replace state facilities and restore natural resources in the area;
- \$1 million in property tax abatements for flooded homes and businesses;
- \$584,000 in education assistance to include school clean up and repair, offset enrollment changes and to assist with increased student transportation costs;
- \$250,000 for historic site cleanup, repair and replacement costs; and
- \$100,000 for the Department of Health to conduct indoor air quality investigations and sampling in public facilities and non-profit organizations.

The employment and economic development money includes \$35 million to local governments “for locally administered grants or loan programs for businesses and nonprofit organizations directly affected by the flood, including those that provide residential, health care, child care, social or other services on behalf of the Department of Human Services.”

By law, FEMA provides 75 percent of eligible costs associated with public infrastructure damage caused by a disaster. The state and local communities are responsible for the rest. Further, federal individual assistance is capped at \$28,200.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

A proclamation calling the Legislature into special session for disaster relief and a “Never, Ever Give Up Flood 2007” bumper sticker lay on Rep. Ken Tschumper’s desk prior to the House convening in special session. His district was hardest hit during the Aug. 18-19 flooding.

“We’ve had dozens of bridges destroyed, miles and miles of roads that need repair,” Tschumper said. “The FEMA money coming in will roughly be about, we’re thinking, \$40 to \$50 million. That’ll be three-fourths of the cost of infrastructure repair.”

Said Erickson Ropes: “This is a huge disaster ... and we need all the tools in the toolbox to rebuild southeast Minnesota.”

The law also provides \$3.7 million for “flood and drought recovery assistance to affected agricultural producers,” \$1 million to help Cook County and Grand Marais with costs associated with a fire in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness earlier this year, \$200,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to Crookston for flood recovery and mitigation issues and \$100,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to Browns Valley to assist in recovery from a March 14 flood. The last two were in the omnibus tax bill ([HF2268*/SF1933/CH149](#)) vetoed by Pawlenty in the regular session.


Further, the bill includes \$2 million to provide a state match necessary to receive \$53.2 million in federal grants and aid for

the Interstate 35W bridge collapse. It also prohibits insurance companies from stating or implying to a policyholder that filing a claim related to the bridge collapse could result in non-renewal or cancellation of that policy or future premium increases.

Some lawmakers expressed concern that more wasn’t done for transportation funding during the one-day special session. A package ([HF946*/SF1986/CH84](#)) that included a number of tax increases, including a 7.5-cent gas tax rise, was vetoed by Pawlenty during the regular session.

Despite much discussion since the bridge collapse, the governor and legislative leaders have not been able to agree on a package that is suitable to both sides.

“We’re going to redouble our efforts to ensure that 2008 is not a year of missed opportunities,” said [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee.

“Every year we wait the need is going to grow greater,” said [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. 

Frequently called numbers

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Senate Information

231 Capitol296-0504

Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol296-2344

Voice mail/order bills.....296-2343

Senate Index

110 Capitol296-2887

Committee Hotline, Senate296-8088

ELECTIONS

HAVA mandate for townships

A new law delays an election mandate for townships by two years.

[SSHF2/SSSF3*](#) exempts townships from having a voting system accessible to disabled voters, including visually impaired, by the 2008 elections. The mandate was part of the Help America Vote Act enacted in 2005.

Under the law, townships must have a system in place for any election after Dec. 31, 2009.

The law was approved 128-2 by the House and 63-0 by the Senate Sept. 11.

[Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona) said action on the bill was needed during the special session because township elections are scheduled for March 2008, and that some jurisdictions may not be in a position to fulfill the estimated statewide \$1.6 million mandate.

Asked to carry the bill by Senate sponsor [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), Pelowski gave credit to [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) and [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), who have been working to address the issues as it relates to townships.

"We expect to have a more comprehensive bill to present to the Legislature when it convenes in February," Hilty said.

— L. SCHUTZ

GOVERNMENT

Unfinished business?

Legislators kept a narrow focus on flood relief during the Sept. 11 special session, but some said the Legislature was leaving unfinished business.

"I am saddened and disappointed that we cannot finish the rest of the business that we have today — that we can't do a transportation bill, a bonding bill and a tax bill," said [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls).

Kahn, whose legislative district contains, by her own estimate, three-quarters of the collapsed Interstate 35W bridge, said the flooding in southeastern Minnesota wasn't the only disaster that needed to be addressed — and she raised concern over the prospect of future disasters.

"I hope (...) that we don't have another reason between now and Feb. 12 to regret that we didn't put the adequate amount of money into our Transportation Department," she said.

In the end, House leaders delivered on their promise to the governor and the minority caucus to limit the scope of the special session — although they appeared to do so grudgingly.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Neil W. Peterson signs a "Contract for Minnesota's Transportation Future" outside the House Chamber. A coalition of supporters for transportation funding welcomed House members Sept. 11 as they gathered to convene in special session.

"As we focus on these communities and their homes, their schools, their places of work, I actually also must say I share a bit of disappointment this evening as well, for some missed opportunities," said [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

Sertich waxed philosophic on the difference between being reactive and proactive in state government. "It is imperative, in moving forward, that we do a better job of being proactive in anticipation of various disasters, both natural and otherwise," he said.

Newly sworn-in [Rep. Steve Drazkowski](#) (R-Wabasha), whose district was hard hit by the recent flooding, said legislators were right to focus their efforts solely on disaster relief.

"The agreement was that the special session focus on flood relief, and I really believe that if we had broadened it, we'd have lost our focus and lost our effectiveness as a body," he said.

In an e-mail to his constituents following adjournment, [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) noted that transportation funding, tax relief and other priorities could have been achieved during the regular session.

"The legislature had a great opportunity for 5 months (January to May 21st) to get work done on many other issues and it's disappointing that it didn't happen," Seifert wrote. "I look forward to the next session, where I hope lawmakers accomplish something, rather than just jamming political bills back and forth with vetoes."

— N. BUSSE

Drazkowski jumps right in

The newest House member, [Rep. Steve Drazkowski](#) (R-Wabasha), found himself immediately in the spotlight after winning the seat vacated by former Rep. Steve Sviggum in a special election Aug. 7.

Residents in his southeastern Minnesota district were among those affected by the Aug. 18-19 flooding. Shortly after being introduced on the House floor Sept. 11, he got to the business of lending support to an aid package to help his district residents.

"I hadn't anticipated that my first minutes and hours in the Minnesota House of Representatives would be used in addressing the response to a natural disaster that squarely hit my district," he said.

[House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) announced that Drazkowski will serve on the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs, and Ways and Means committees and the House State Government Finance Division. To make room for Drazkowski on the ag committee, [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) will move to the House Finance Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at 651-296-2881 to schedule a tour.

RELIEF FOR RUSHFORD



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Rep. Ken Tschumper meets with Rushford residents after the House passed a disaster relief bill for southeast Minnesota flood assistance. Nearly 250 Rushford homes were destroyed or condemned and about 80 businesses suffered severe damage and are currently not operating, according to Tschumper.

MINNESOTA INDEX

When it rains, it pours

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Flood relief, in millions as approximate, contained in 2007 special session | |
| disaster relief law | \$157 |
| Preliminary damage estimates, in millions, from Aug. 18-19, 2007, flooding..... | \$150 |
| Counties declared a federal disaster area after flooding | 7 |
| Deaths attributed to the floods..... | 7 |
| Approximate number of homes destroyed | 300 |
| Inches of rain that fell in Wabasha during a seven-hour period | 12.73 |
| Funding, in millions, appropriated during 2007 regular legislative session to | |
| Browns Valley in response to March 14, 2007 flood | \$2 |
| Funding appropriated in 2007 special session for Browns Valley flood relief..... | \$200,000 |
| Funding appropriated in 2007 special session for Crookston flood relief..... | \$400,000 |
| Millions of flood relief in 2002 special session law for northwestern Minnesota, | |
| including Roseau | \$31.8 |
| Preliminary damage estimate from 2002 flooding, including agricultural | |
| impacts, in millions..... | \$150 |
| Counties affected by June 2002 flooding | 19 |
| Percentage of homes flooded in Roseau in June 2002 | 80 |
| Flood relief in 1997 special session law for the Red River basin, in millions | \$125 |
| State and local matching funds in the law, in millions | \$30 |
| Total aid for Red River basin communities affected by 1997 floods, in millions | \$831 |
| Percentage of homes flooded in East Grand Forks in the spring of 1997 | 99 |

Sources: Federal Emergency Management Agency, Sept. 20, 2002, Session Weekly Special Session Issue, House of Representatives Web site, National Weather Service

L. SCHUTZ

Bill Introductions

Tuesday, September 11

SSHF1-Tschumper (DFL)

Flood disaster relief funding provided relating to floods of August 2007, federal funds use provided relating to I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, local aid provided relating to other disasters, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

SSHF2-Pelowski (DFL)

Voting system for disabled voters required in township elections.

SSHF3-Clark (DFL)

Insurers prohibited from penalizing insured persons for claims resulting from vehicles on a bridge when the bridge collapsed and from providing incorrect information regarding the effect of a claim on future insurability or premium rates.



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