

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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CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Agriculture • 5
Business • 5
Consumers • 5
Crime • 6
Education • 6
Elections • 8
Employment • 9

Energy • 9
Environment • 10
Game & Fish • 10
Government • 11
Health & Human Services • 11
Higher Education • 12
Housing • 13

Humanities • 13
Immigration • 13
Law • 13
Military • 14
Notes • 16
Taxes • 15
Transportation • 15

BILL INTRODUCTIONS (HF1891-HF2164) • 18 - 23

FEATURES

FIRST READING: Non-elected, MAC and Met \$900 million budget draws concern • 3-4

AT ISSUE: Technology's role could increase in elections • 17

MINNESOTA INDEX: Not working for a livin' • 24

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

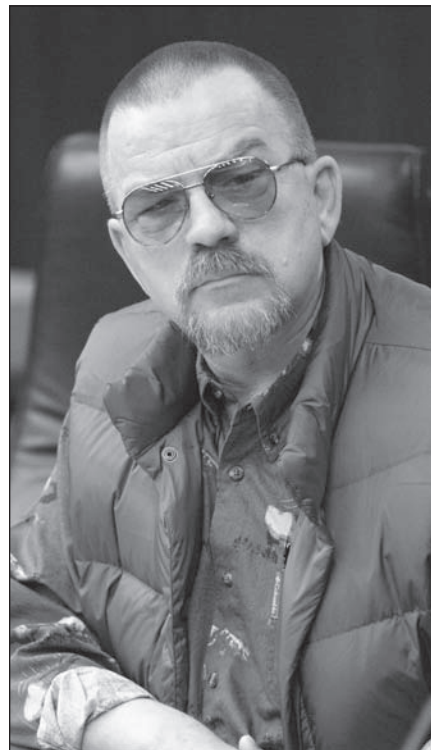


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

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 Neville](#) (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](#).

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