

SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 17 • APRIL 27, 2007

VETO: THE STAMP OF DOOM

INVADING SPECIES

A TAXING SITUATION

HF2444 - HF2456

SESSION WEEKLY

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

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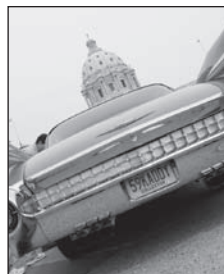
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Session Weekly (ISSN 1049-8176) is published weekly during the legislative session by Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298. Periodicals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

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

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



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On the cover: Casey Clare McLaughlin listens as Rep. Brita Sailer reads "Who Says Woof?" during the annual read-a-thon in the Capitol Rotunda April 25.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

Veto: the stamp of doom

A brief history of the Legislature's most dreaded four-letter word

By Nick Busse

This is where the session gets interesting. With the May 21 constitutional adjournment deadline looming, legislators could still have their toughest work ahead of them. Following a week of marathon floor sessions marked by long and sometimes arduous debates, House and Senate members sat down together in conference committees this week in hopes of hammering out agreements on a series of omnibus finance bills that together comprise the state budget.

Tasked with working out compromises between House and Senate versions of bills, conference committees can be long and complicated affairs. In the days and weeks to come, legislators will have to barter, negotiate, bargain and bicker with each other to get their bills in order before they can finally be whisked away to the governor's desk for signature.

Once they get there, however, many of them are likely to be vetoed.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has vowed not to sign any budget bill that would result in a tax increase — which, this year, is just about all of them. Moreover, despite having warned DFL legislators against things like tuition breaks for illegal immigrants and domestic partner benefits for gay and lesbian state employees — both of which are tucked into budget bills this year — the governor and the Legislature appear to be on a collision course.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) has been sounding the alarm.

"I would tell you that there is no way that this bill is going to be signed by the governor," Seifert proclaimed during an April 19 floor debate of the omnibus state government finance bill. "Please, at some point, acknowledge that there is a governor — that there needs to be compromise, there

needs to be common sense — and stop living in fantasyland."

[House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) acknowledges the governor's existence, but has no intention of serving as a "rubber stamp" for him.

"Members, we're the House of Representatives. We don't live in a monarchy where, when the governor says 'jump,' we say 'how high.' It's our responsibility to actually put our own budget together," Sertich said.

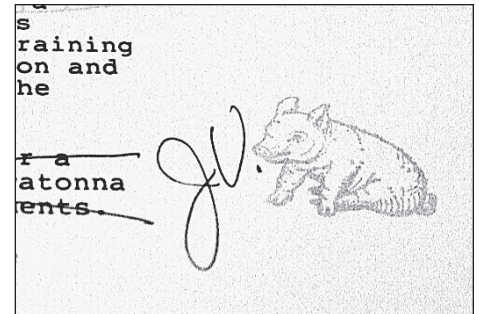
Executive privilege

The veto — the power of the governor to reject bills passed by the Legislature — has been used sparingly thus far by Pawlenty, who for the first four years of his administration has enjoyed the support of a Republican-controlled House to counterbalance the DFL-controlled Senate.

This year, however, he doesn't have that luxury. DFLers now hold an 85-49 majority in the House and 44-23 majority in the Senate — just

five House members and one senator shy of the two-thirds majority required to override a veto.

The last time Minnesota saw its legislative and executive branches controlled by two different parties was during the administration



FILE PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Gov. Jesse Ventura used this pig stamp to veto items in bills he considered pork.

of Gov. Arne Carlson. During his two terms in office from 1991-1999, Carlson, a Republican, exercised his veto power 179 times — more than the previous 11 governors combined. For comparison, in his first four years in office, Pawlenty vetoed just 16 bills.

At one point, Carlson's staff was so busy preparing the governor's veto statements that they hung a banner in their office reading "veto command center." [Former House Speaker Bob Vanasek](#) (DFL-New Prague), who served as speaker during part of Carlson's first term, said Carlson used the veto differently than other governors.

"I was there when Al Quie was governor with a DFL Legislature, and his number of vetoes was far fewer than what Governor Carlson employed. So, I think it was a different way of viewing his veto power. And he was much more aggressive, obviously, in using it than his predecessors," Vanasek said.

Bernie Omann, a former House member who also served as Carlson's chief of staff, said Carlson used the veto as a tool of negotiation.

"It's all a part of the negotiations process, at the end of the day."

Omann said that Carlson generally tried to warn legislators ahead of time when he intended to veto a bill, so there were few surprises. And while a standoff between the governor and the Legislature may look

First Reading continued on page 4



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Surrounded by commissioners and legislators, Gov. Tim Pawlenty brings the veto stamp down on a 2005 bill that included an increase in the state gas tax.

First Reading continued from page 3

chaotic to the public, Omann described the communication between the governor's office and the Legislature as "continuous."

"It's clearly a shared governance, and it's not complicated if there's communication. It gets complicated when communication breaks down."

Negotiations

Of course, a gubernatorial veto does not necessarily ensure that a bill cannot become law. A vote of two-thirds of the members of both the House and Senate can override a veto.

Such overrides are rare, however. Vetoes have been overridden only 13 times since 1939, with all but five of the overrides occurring during the administration of former Gov. Jesse Ventura, who was not attached to either of the state's two major political parties.

(Ventura ran as an Reform Party candidate, later joining the Independence Party of Minnesota.)

Currently, the Republican minorities in both the House and Senate have some authority, in that they have the power to sustain the governor's veto. Despite this, Omann and Vanasek both say that the minority party has little direct power to influence negotiations.

"I assume that they would be

involved in negotiations, but the real power is between the majority leadership and the governor," Vanasek said.

According to Vanasek, a legislator who votes "no" on a bill would generally vote to sustain a veto; however, he added that making significant changes to a bill in conference committee could potentially change how a legislator votes — especially as session draws to a close.

The last time Minnesota saw its legislative and executive branches controlled by two different parties was during the administration of Gov. Arne Carlson. During his two terms in office from 1991-1999, Carlson, a Republican, exercised his veto power 179 times — more than the previous 11 governors combined. For comparison, in his first four years in office, Pawlenty vetoed just 16 bills.

"When you get to the end of the session, legislators are going to want to go home on time. And if you do have a situation where the governor does veto one or more of the major bills, and there is a vote on an override, I think there will be some pressure to vote to override in order to get the work of the session done," he said.

How will the end of this session play out? Vanasek and Omann are cautiously optimistic.

"I think it's been extremely civil, in the public discourse, between the Legislature and the governor. I can remember situations where things were a little more stressed than they currently are today. I think everybody's been very respectful of each other during this process. ... It's just going to be a matter of putting things together at the end of the day," Omann said.

Vanasek said the governor and legislative leaders need to recognize each other's authority.

"I think it's always helpful when both sides realize they are equal branches, and one side does not perceive themselves as dominant over the other. I think that's when you get into trouble." 🐼

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held April 19-26 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Commissioners can act as consultants

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The [Board of Animal Health](#) consists of five members appointed by the governor, three of whom are livestock producers and two who are practicing veterinarians. A new law signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty April 20 allows for the commissioners of agriculture, natural resources and health to serve as consultants to the board.

The board is the state's official animal disease control and eradication agency and was created to protect the health of the state's domestic animals.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton) and [Sen. Joe Gimse](#) (R-Willmar), the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF878*/SF1263/CH19](#)

— L. SCHUTZ

Ag, Veterans bill gets review

At first glance, there seems to be more than an \$8 million gap between the House and Senate 2008-09 General Fund spending proposals for agriculture and veterans programming. But a closer look shows there is little difference between what each of the two bodies would like to ultimately see as the final omnibus agriculture and veterans finance bill. The difference could be in how one-time money is accounted for by each body.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), [HF2227](#) would include funding for the governor's Next Generation Bioenergy Initiative and programs to support veterans, especially important as the state prepares for the expected late-summer return of more than 2,500 National Guard members, who are currently deployed.

The House would like to spend \$175 million over the biennium — about \$750,000 more than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's target — for the departments of Veterans Affairs, Military

Affairs, Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.

As conferees reviewed the side-by-side comparisons, several House provisions came under Senate scrutiny.

Some provisions, including one from [Rep. Patti Fritz](#) (DFL-Faribault) calling for \$80,000 in the first year of the biennium for suicide prevention and psychological support for veterans, came too late in the process to be included in the original Senate companion bill.

Testimony was taken on other House provisions, including proposals for:

- funding for participation of the state's World War II veterans at the dedication of the new World War II memorial in June;
- a residential antimicrobial pesticide applicator license study; and
- a statewide waste pesticide collection program.

A bill that was nearly an all-nighter in a House committee earlier this session had a contentious discussion in the conference committee. The House provision relates to the practice of animal husbandry, which includes animal chiropractic and massage, artificial insemination, trimming hooves and making horseshoes. The Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine would like statutes changed regarding training for these practitioners. Supporters said the procedures should be left to those that are trained, including veterinarians. Others point to the shortage of veterinarians in the state, and that the provision would make it more difficult for farmers to have procedures completed on their animals in a timely manner.

Next Generation and biofuels initiatives were being worked out as well. While the House and Senate provisions are on the same track, some House provisions in these areas are included in other omnibus bills.

— L. SCHUTZ

BONDING

Bonding report approved

After just three meetings, the Capital Investment Finance Conference Committee approved its [report](#) April 25.

Sponsored by [Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Keith Langseth](#) (DFL-Glyndon), the report contains language from both the Senate and the House omnibus bills, [HF886](#) and [SF2157](#).

The agreement totals nearly \$334.1 million.

The original omnibus House and Senate bills were \$255 million and \$285.1 million, respectively. Some conferees were concerned about the higher target.

"It's hard to explain how this is a compromise when the total is over the target (amount)," said [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover).

Hausman said the new total is not so much a compromise as it is a new target altogether for the committee.

Included in the report is \$164 million in one-time money from the state's General Fund and \$140.2 million in bonded money. An additional \$33.4 million will be provided from the state's trunk highway fund.

Some appropriations include:

- \$52.7 million for Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement that will go to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities;
- \$40 million for design and construction of the Central Corridor Transitway between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul;
- \$37 million for a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, which would be used by the [University of Minnesota-Duluth](#) mens and womens hockey programs;
- \$30 million for the Red Lake School District to renovate the high school and middle school to provide classrooms and related facilities for technology, vocational, physical and community education among other needed improvements;
- \$12.7 million for exterior repair of the Department of Transportation Building in St. Paul;
- \$2.5 million for a forensic crime lab in Anoka County;
- \$2 million for the state's share of a high-speed rail line between St. Paul and Chicago;
- \$1.3 million to the Western Mesabi Mine Planning Board to construct siphons, a conveyance system and other improvements to accommodate water level and outflow control of the water level in the Canisteo mine pit in Itasca County; and
- \$200,000 to construct a veteran's memorial in Eden Prairie.

— S. HEGMAN

CRIME

Compensation differences

Conferees have begun to do the time to agree on funding that would address crime-related issues.

Chaired by [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), sponsors of [HF829](#)*/[SF1992](#), the 10-member Public Safety Finance Conference Committee plans to receive budget targets by the end of the week, when it will begin to vote on what appropriations and policies will remain in the bill.

The House has proposed \$1.89 billion in appropriations, while the Senate is at nearly \$1.88 billion. One of the main differences is how each chamber addresses compensation.

The House proposes a salary increase for all departments covered in the bill at 2 percent, except for the Department of Corrections, which is set at 4.5 percent. The Senate proposes an across the board increase of 3.25 percent, with an exception for judges, who would get a 5 percent increase.

The House budget includes savings that would come from opening new drug courts and implementing more reentry programs. Some senators are concerned that these projections may not be very reliable and the savings may not appear.

Paymar, who believes the courts and programs will save the state money, provided material that had been previously submitted to the House Public Safety Finance Division attesting to the projected savings from these initiatives.

"If we don't have a savings or fiscal impact, then why are we funding these drug courts? Why are we funding reentry programs? It makes no sense to me," he said.

No action was taken by the committee on either issue.

On the policy side, a working group, chaired by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), met to discuss the bill's policy provisions and prepare recommendations for the full conference committee.

At its first meeting April 24, there was discussion — but no resolution — about a provision that would amend the statute defining criminal vehicular operation. In the Senate language, someone would be guilty if "the driver had actual knowledge that the motor vehicle was defectively maintained and the injury or death was caused by the defective maintenance."

[Sen. Thomas Neuville](#) (R-Northfield) said this language was drafted because of an incident involving someone driving a trailer that was unsafe. The driver was cited for driving without a safety hitch, yet he continued to pull the trailer. The trailer eventually released and killed two people.

Mullery said the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee decided to remove the provision from the bill. There was concern

about those who may have intended to get their cars fixed, but because of money or time constraints had not gotten the work done. This provision would throw too wide of a net, Mullery said.

[Sen. Mary Olson](#) (DFL-Bemidji), however, saw it differently.

"We always consider driving to be a right and not a privilege in this state because of the dire consequences that can happen," she said. "If a car is not maintained, the driver is putting people in severe danger. People have been killed because of that."

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Education conference committee

The E-12 Education Finance Conference Committee started off with what some called a good omen by aligning targets to \$950 million over current base funding on April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) calls for \$13.94 billion in spending. The Senate version, [SF2095](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer), calls for \$13.92 billion in spending.

The House bill spreads funding over a greater range of E-12 education programming than does the Senate bill, which looks to eliminate the special education cross subsidy and restore the annual growth factor of 4.6 percent for special education that was eliminated in 2003.

The monetary differences in bill appropriations are close; however, when and where the money goes varies:

- the House proposes increasing the basic funding formula by \$441 million, a 3 percent increase in each year of the biennium, the Senate \$292 million or 2 percent in each year;
- the House proposes spending \$1.3 billion on special education and the Senate \$1.7 billion for the biennium. The Senate puts \$361 million toward a regular increase for the biennium and \$123 million for the current fiscal year. The House put \$65 million toward a regular increase for the biennium, but no increase for 2007;
- the House increases Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and College in Schools funding by \$16.3 million for the biennium; the Senate has no increase;
- the House allocates \$8.7 million for the 21st century high schools program for the biennium; the Senate has no allocation;
- neither bill directs funding towards the governor's 4R high schools program;

- the House allocates one-time funding of \$29.1 million for school technology in fiscal year 2009; the Senate has no such funding because all of its one-time appropriations are in SF2190;
- the House includes \$35.6 million for libraries and the Senate \$25.6 million for the biennium;
- the House has \$40.2 million for Head Start and the Senate \$38.2 million for the biennium;
- the House allocates \$1.25 million each year for the early childhood scholarship demonstration project, the Senate \$53.8 million in fiscal year 2009; and
- the House has \$94 million for fiscal year 2009 and beyond for voluntary all-day kindergarten; the Senate has no funding allocation.

— S. HARDING

ENERGY

Wind power incentive extended

Signed
by
the
governor

A new law allows an individual whose application was lost in the mail to take advantage of a state renewable energy production incentive program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Terry Morrow](#) (DFL-St. Peter) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), the law is effective April 21, 2007.

According to Morrow, the law was drafted for Dave Arnold, CEO of Arnold Wind Farm — which consists of a single 1.5 megawatt wind turbine in southwest Minnesota. Arnold said his turbine met all the necessary criteria to take advantage of the state's wind energy production incentive, but that his application for the program was lost by the U.S. Post Office and returned to him after the application deadline had expired.

"This legislation simply extends the cutoff date for the receipt of the application," Arnold told a House division.

The law applies only to someone who filed their original application prior to March 1, 2005, but has not received approval. The new deadline is July 31, 2007. Arnold is the only known person to whom the law applies.

[HF472](#)*/[SF239](#)/CH20

— N. BUSSE

ENVIRONMENT

Dedicated funding bill approved

A bill that would raise the state's sales tax to create dedicated funding for the environment and the arts cleared its first committee hurdle



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Leon Iron Moccasin, from Osseo, left, and Jim Poulter, from St. Louis Park “canoe” around the Capitol grounds April 24 in support of money for Clean Water Legacy Act programs. Funding is provided in the omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill, awaiting conference committee action.

in the House April 25.

[HF2285](#), sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), would propose a constitutional amendment to raise the state’s sales tax by three-eighths of 1 percent until 2034. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill and sent it to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

If approved by voters in the 2008 general election, the amendment would generate approximately \$281.6 million in new revenue over 25 years, to be divvied up as follows:

- 25 percent for fish and wildlife habitat;
- 25 percent for clean waters;
- 15 percent for parks and trails;
- 15 percent for drinking water protection;
- 10 percent for arts and cultural heritage; and
- 10 percent for the Legislature to appropriate at its discretion for the purposes listed above.

Sertich and others said the bill is necessary to address a crisis in environmental funding. Although similar measures have been brought forward unsuccessfully several times in the past, Sertich is confident that the Legislature will pass it this year and that voters will approve it.

“We could talk a lot about the last 10 years, but I’m really looking forward to the next 25 years,” he said.

During an April 24 hearing, numerous outdoor enthusiasts and conservation advocates pleaded for passage of the bill. No one testified in opposition; however,

when pressed by repeated questioning from [Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings), many testifiers expressed indifference toward the arts and cultural heritage portion of the bill — a provision that McNamara and other Republicans oppose.

“People are not dumb. They know we are not in a crisis to fund arts and humanities,” said [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar), who tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by removing the arts and heritage funding. He added that voters were less likely to approve dedicated funding if arts were included.

— N. BUSSE

E-waste bill passed

A bill that aims to solve the state’s e-waste problem by establishing a system to recycle old TVs and other unwanted electronics devices was passed 112-21 by the House April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), [HF854*/SF235](#) would force consumer electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle an amount of devices proportional to the weight they sold during the previous year. The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the sponsor.

Under the bill, manufacturers would be required to collect an amount of devices equal to 80 percent of the weight of products sold during the previous year — except for the first year, in which the requirement would be 60 percent. Devices collected outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area would count for 1.5 times their actual weight.

In addition, manufacturers would have to pay a base fee of \$2,500 per year (\$5,000 in the first year), plus a variable fee ranging from 30 cents to 50 cents per pound of product for each pound if they fall short of their target. Revenues from the fees would be used to fund recycling programs outside the 11-county metro area.

Sailer said the bill uses a “manufacturers’ responsibility” approach to recycling e-waste, and that it would apply only to video display devices sold to households, not businesses. Noting that the state’s 2006 ban on disposal of such devices via the normal solid waste stream has resulted in illegal dumping in many counties, she said the bill is long overdue.

“We’ve been working on [the bill] for five years, and it’s time to move ahead,” Sailer said.

[Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar) tried unsuccessfully to amend the bill by lowering the collection requirement to 33 percent — a goal he characterized as “something that’s achievable, rather than something that’s ridiculous.” He said the bill would send electronics prices skyrocketing.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee) said the bill ignores the role of personal responsibility in the relationship between consumers and manufacturers, arguing that consumers should be responsible for recycling their own property.

— N. BUSSE

GOVERNMENT

Sesquicentennial funding

A commission organized to plan the state’s 150th birthday party next year would be authorized to accept donations to help fund the celebration, under a bill passed 121-10 by the House April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), [HF2135/SF1949*](#) would authorize the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission to directly accept gifts, grants and other donations to commemorate the sesquicentennial. It would also permit the commission to enter into contracts and award grants. Donations are now directed to the state’s General Fund.

The 17-member commission was created in 2005 by the Legislature to plan “celebratory activities and public engagement in every county in the state of Minnesota.” The commission would be permitted to meet by telephone or other electronic means if certain conditions are met.

A successful amendment offered by [Rep. Jeremy Kalin](#) (DFL-Lindstrom) would

“encourage all activities celebrating the sesquicentennial to be as energy efficient as practicable.”

The amendment doesn't require the commission to be energy-efficient nor does it prescribe penalties for not complying, said [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria). “This is pointless, it's useless, it's a waste of our time.”

As amended, the bill now returns to the Senate, which passed the original version 65-0 April 18.

— P. OSTBERG

GREATER MINNESOTA

Replacing town road signs

The state could get a hefty return on a transportation safety investment.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF562](#) would appropriate \$600,000 to the town road sign replacement program, making the state eligible for a \$3 million federal grant.

Approved April 24 by the House Finance Committee, the bill awaits action by the House Ways and Means Committee.

Money for the program is also included the omnibus transportation finance bill ([HF946](#)), sponsored by Lieder.

For the state to be eligible to receive the federal dollars, Kent Sulem, attorney for the Minnesota Association of Townships, said that the appropriation is needed to meet the required 80-20 split.

The Senate appropriates \$2.5 million in [SF2190](#), that body's omnibus one-time appropriations bill, sponsored by [Sen. Richard Cohen](#) (DFL-St. Paul). Approved by the Senate, the bill awaits House action.

Reestablished by the 2005 Legislature, the program, in part, includes inventorying county and town road signs, evaluating their condition, potentially replacing signs and establishing an ongoing maintenance program. Because of better materials, newer signs are expected to last 15 to 20 years.

However, the program is not effective until there is an appropriation from state or federal funds.

The House bill originally sought \$2 million, but a change in budget targets reduced the amount to \$600,000, Lieder said.

The remaining \$1.4 million of the original request would have been used to entice more federal dollars, which Sulem said could be crucial now that [U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar](#) (D-Minn.) chairs the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives.

[U.S. Rep. Tim Walz](#) (D-Minn.) has submitted a supplemental \$9 million request

for the program, Sulem said. “If we were to receive that money, we'd need an additional \$1.8 million in match.”

— M. COOK

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

A \$100 million spread

Members of the Health and Human Services Finance Conference Committee avoided contentious conversation during the first two meetings April 24 and 25. Instead, committee members focused on similarities between the bills and agreed on dozens of provisions related to licensing, child care, mental health and public health.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF297/SF2171](#)* would provide funding for health care, nursing homes, mental health, public health, child care and more.

The bills vary significantly in key aspects, however. The House version would spend more than \$10 billion in General Fund dollars over the biennium. It includes a \$99 million health care proposal known as “Cover all Kids,” that is absent in the Senate bill. The House also includes a multitude of mental health provisions and public health initiatives, such as lead abatement standards, studies and health tracking and monitoring, not included in the Senate's proposal.

The bills' total spending differs by about \$100 million.

Adopted provisions include:

- Senate language for the early hearing detection and intervention act — an initiative of [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) — which would require hospitals to develop comprehensive hearing screening programs and report screening results to parents and the Department of Health;
- language to eliminate grant reductions for family planning services, which provide reproductive health care;
- an increase in child care assistance eligibility to 250 percent of federal poverty guidelines;
- changes to work requirements under the Minnesota Family Investment Program; and
- Senate language for family stabilization services, which is designed for MFIP recipients at risk of long-term welfare dependency.

The committee also heard testimony on HealthMatch, a computer system designed to automate eligibility for Minnesota's health care programs. Its implementation has been delayed several times, and legislators had heard different estimates on how long it

would take Department of Human Services to integrate new health care programs, should any be passed this year.

The Senate gave the department six months; the House gave them eight.

Department staff warned members that the timetable would vary based on various factors, but said they would make every effort to stick to the five months originally forecasted.

— M. SIMPSON

Task force extension

The Maternal and Child Health Advisory Task Force would continue to operate another four years, under a bill passed 124-8 by the House April 23.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kim Norton](#) (DFL-Rochester), [HF1981](#) would extend the task force expiration date from June 30, 2007, to June 30, 2011. The task force consists of 15 members from maternal and child health services and community health boards, as well as others interested in health issues as they relate to mothers and children.

According to the Department of Health Web site, the task force was created by the Legislature in 1982 to advise the health commissioner on the health care needs of mothers and children, the frequency and types of use of the department programs related to maternal and child health, and program guidelines and criteria to provide related programs to low-income populations and high-risk persons. The task force also administers the federal maternal and child health block grant in Minnesota.

The bill now awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the Senate sponsor.

— P. OSTBERG

HOUSING

Mortgage broker regulations

**Signed
by
the
governor**

It almost goes without saying that to get into a new home, you need to get a loan.

There's no guarantee, however, that everyone will qualify for a loan, or that lenders will offer a good deal.

To protect the many Minnesotans looking into new or refinanced mortgage loans, a new law regulates certain practices of mortgage brokers and lenders.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), the law prohibits a mortgage broker or lender from making or arranging a loan without verifying the borrower's ability to pay back the money,

also taking into account insurance, taxes and interest. It also requires the lender to inform the borrower of a first-lien mortgage loan that the borrower will also have to pay taxes and insurance.

The law prohibits the practice of “churning,” which is when a lender arranges or provides a new loan to finance an existing loan when the new loan does not benefit the borrower.

Signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on April 20, the law takes effect Aug. 1, 2007.

[HF1004](#)*/[SF809](#)/CH18

— C. GREEN

INDUSTRY

Penalty waived

Truckers hauling biofuels could have a misdemeanor penalty waived for not hauling the state required diesel-biodiesel blend, under a bill awaiting gubernatorial action.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar) and [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), [HF1300/SF1069](#)* would give the commissioner of commerce the ability to grant a temporary exemption from the blending requirements if the supply is insufficient to meet state law requirements.

It was approved 132-0 by the House April 23, five days after it was approved 64-1 by the Senate.

Juhnke said that a situation occurred last year where those hauling fuels were unable to obtain the required blended amount because a terminal wasn't operating properly. Although incidents at pipelines and refineries are “few and far between,” he said there is still a risk for those hauling the goods to be violating the law.

Under the bill, terminal operators would be required to notify the director of the [Weights and Measures Division](#) of the [Department of Commerce](#) when “regular grade gasoline, No. 1 diesel, No. 3 diesel, kerosene, heating oil, ethanol, and biodiesel are physically not available for sale to licensed distributors.”

Also, the commissioner would be required to work with the agriculture commissioner, biodiesel producers, ethanol producers, pipeline operators and terminal operators to ensure that biodiesel and ethanol are available for blending at pipeline and refinery terminals.

— P. OSTBERG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County recorder appointment

When [HF1193/SF1098](#)* was debated on the House floor, [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) said it was another instance of

SPECIAL ADDRESS

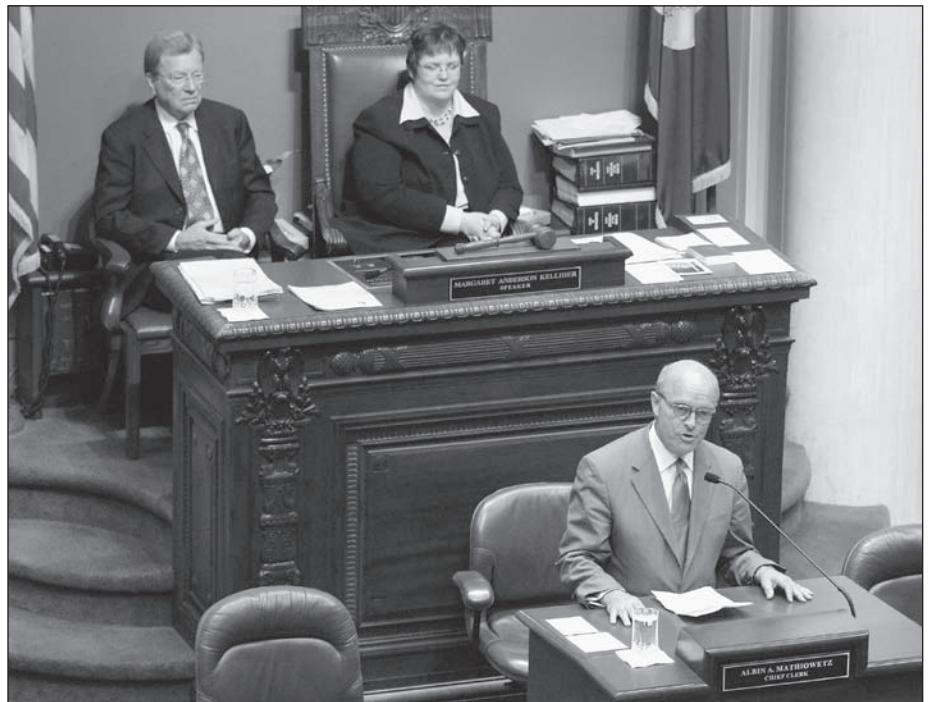


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and Senate President James Metzen listen to an address by Swedish Ambassador to the United States Gunnar Lund during an April 23 joint convention of the House and Senate.

the Legislature getting rid of elected officials in favor of appointed positions, instead of listening to the voice of the voters.

“We need to stop this trend,” he said.

Awaiting the signature of Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the bill would authorize Beltrami County to appoint someone to the office of recorder, which up to now has been an elected position. This change would also be subject to an 80 percent vote by the county board and a reverse referendum. The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Brita Sailer](#) (DFL-Park Rapids), said that there was already unanimous support from board members, and that the bill would allow the current officeholder to complete her term before the new appointment is made.

Before being approved by the House 87-23 on April 23, [Rep. Larry Howes](#) (R-Walker) and [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport) both spoke of how a similar law had helped their constituents, while [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) said, “the last time I checked, county recorders are not making policy.” This bill is not an anti-local control issue, he said.

Also sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), the bill was passed 54-0 by the Senate April 16.

— C. GREEN

Charter commission expense limits

The amount of money allocated to a charter commission for expenses has not changed since 1961.

Approved 106-26 by the House April 23, [HF1105/SF1017](#)*, would provide these commissions with more funds.

Sponsored by [Rep. Carolyn Laine](#) (DFL-Columbia Heights) and [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), the bill would raise the maximum amount of funds available from \$1,500 to \$5,000 for a city of the second, third or fourth class. These cities have populations of less than 100,000. This would give commissions the resources to serve more effectively, Laine said.

Passed by the Senate 56-0 on April 16, the bill now awaits approval from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

— C. GREEN

St. Louis County appointment

**Signed
by
the
governor**

The [St. Louis County Board of Commissioners](#) could now have an easier time filling its civil service director position.

Revising current statute, a new law allows the board to appoint the director to serve in unclassified service.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Visitors check out a 1959 Cadillac owned by John Eisele during the Minnesota Street Rod Association's annual visit to the Capitol on April 24.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the law eliminates the previous detailed appointment process, which included the creation of an examination committee.

The law was signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on April 20, and took effect one day later.

[HF1432/SF1133*/CH17](#)

— C. GREEN

TRANSPORTATION

Conference group slowly accelerating

Conferees trying to safely merge the differences between the House and Senate omnibus transportation finance bills shouldn't have to worry about traffic congestion as they continue to motor along toward an agreement.

After two meetings, conferees are scheduled to meet on Saturday, April 28, in hopes of getting further down the track toward the checkered flag.

Sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), [SF1986](#) totals \$1.48 billion. The nearly \$1.29 billion House proposal ([HF946](#)) is sponsored by [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston). However, conferees are expected to receive a new target from legislative leaders before the week is out.

Conferees agreed April 25 on language that is in both bills, including a change whereby the vehicle registration tax would no longer be capped at \$189 for the first year and \$99 thereafter, as was enacted during Gov. Jesse Ventura's administration.

Also agreed upon is a 75-cent increase in the cost of filing for a vehicle title, driver's license, state identification card and motorized bicycle operator's permit.

Agreement could not be reached on a proposed wheelage tax, whereby counties could levy \$20 annually on each motor vehicle subject to annual registration domiciled in the county.

The House plan would exempt motorcycles, trucks and tractors in excess of 26,000 pounds. Supporters said this would help businesses that are headquartered in one place but have a fleet in many different counties. Opponents claim the exemption sends the wrong message to all other owners that must pay the fee.

A proposed gas tax increase is yet to be resolved. The Senate plan calls for a 10-cent gas tax increase beginning on July 1, 2007; the House plan calls for a 5-cent increase on that date and another 5-cent increase one year later. Additionally, the Senate plan would index the increase based on the consumer price index in ensuing years.

Other differences include the imposition of a local transportation sales tax, dedication of motor vehicle sales tax revenue and the amount of bonding in the next decade. The House plan calls for \$100 million in bonding for each of the next 10 years for trunk highway improvements; the Senate plan, \$200 million per year.

— M. COOK

Provisions get another green light

A bill that, in part, addresses traffic regulations, vehicle registration, Department of Transportation planning reports, towing authority, railway safety and truck size and weight restrictions received approval April 25 from the House Ways and Means Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Frank Hornstein](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF1351](#) awaits House floor action.

The bill has no companion; however, some Senate policy provisions have been incorporated into that body's omnibus transportation finance bill ([SF1986](#)).

Among the provisions successfully amended onto the bill by the House Finance Committee April 24 is one where by a responsible authority "may use a design-build method of project development and construction of light rail transit," and another that would permit

the Metropolitan Council to offer discounted bus service passes to certain charitable organizations.

An amendment successfully offered by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson) would require the reopening of the Culkin rest area along Interstate 35. He said it would cost about \$7,000 to reopen the area and \$116,000 per year to operate — costs to be absorbed by [MnDOT](#).

The rest area was closed by the department in October 2005 as a cost-saving measure. It is one of three located within a 50-mile stretch of interstate: one is 26 miles south at Kettle River and another is 24 miles north near Spirit Mountain in Duluth.

Hilty and [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) said the rest area, which also has a lake and some trails, was a gift to the state from the Culkin family with the understanding it would remain open.

The bill also calls for the department to:

- perform a study of speed limits on local roads;
- look at the state's long-term transportation needs, including highways, bridges and transit, and identify the strategies to meet those needs; and
- undertake state rail inspections and create a state rail inspector position.

Concern was voiced about the extended vehicle weight limit permits and load restrictions allowed for in the bill and the effect this would have on driving surfaces.

As amended, the bill allows road authorities to issue permits for heavier weight loads for six- and seven-axle vehicles carrying raw or unprocessed agricultural products for a fee. Other haulers, such as those carrying forest products, can already go to heavier weights.

The truck weight provisions would only be effective if the gas tax increase, provided for in the omnibus transportation finance bills, is enacted. "It simply acknowledges that we're going to have additional wear and tear on the roads and for that reason we ought to have some additional funding in place for that," Hornstein said.

— M. Cook



Fiscal restraint

Conference committee members may find themselves meeting during meal time.

Neither [Rep. Bernie Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston) nor [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), co-chairs of the Transportation Finance Conference Committee, are fans of evening

LATE ACTION

Smoking ban still fuming

Try as they might, opponents were unable to snuff out passage of a potential statewide smoking ban.

After nearly eight hours of debate on April 26 and 37 amendments, the bill passed 85-45 on a vote that was not along party lines.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), [HF305/SF238*](#) would prohibit smoking in public places, including all places of employment, public meetings and public transit.

As amended, the bill returns to the Senate, which passed its version 41-24 on March 27. A conference committee is expected to be needed to work out the differences.

Huntley said the bill is about protecting workers, who he said are at greater risk of heart disease, cancer and other ailments because of exposure to secondhand smoke.

"Five hundred and eighty Minnesotans die from secondhand smoke each year," he said. "There is no risk-free level of exposure, and separating smokers and non-smokers, cleaning the air and ventilation systems cannot remove the dangers."

Opponents didn't contest the health issues, but they did disagree with claims made by Huntley and [Rep. Dan Severson](#)

(R-Sauk Rapids), the lead Republican on the bill, that the net impact of a ban on businesses is negligible.

"Rep. Severson, you keep saying that there's no economic impact," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague). "If that's so, it negates your bill. Your bill is based on a differential ... that says we need a ban that includes everyone. If there is no economic impact then you don't need this bill."

Several members tried to chip away at the bill's scope by offering amendments that would have excused certain groups from the ban, including:

- taconite miners;
- bars without full kitchens;
- cities that border state lines;
- townships if they so choose; and
- certain union employees.

A few amendments passed, including one offered by [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake) that would exempt veterans in rest camps, and one from [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) that applies to farmhands.

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) tried to reincorporate language that would permit businesses with approved ventilation systems to allow smoking. His amendment failed. The bill currently provides an exemption to bars with ventilated smoking rooms, which are closed from employees, so long as their local government approves it.

— M. SIMPSON

meetings, so they agreed most meetings would be scheduled for 3 p.m. in room 5 of the State Office Building.

"If we do go a little bit later and there is some food provided, it's always been the tradition that wherever the conference committee is held that that chamber would buy," Murphy quipped.

As laughter ensued, Lieder quickly responded that "We will never be meeting at lunch or dinnertime."

Generally, House committees meet in the building; Senate meetings are in the State Capitol.

— M. Cook

No opposition, no problem

DFL members of the House Finance Committee were in luck April 26, when none of the committee's 13 Republican members showed up for a hearing on four bills. It made passing them easy.

[Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), chairman of the committee, had originally intended to wait for his Republican colleagues, who were apparently having breakfast with Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Carlson waited approximately a half-hour before soliciting the advice of his fellow DFLers, who suggested the committee move ahead with voting on the bills.

That was fine with [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton), who was there to present a pair of bills relating to renewable energy. Peterson began presenting his first bill to the committee; however, when informed that no Republican members were present in the room, he announced, to much laughter all around, "I'm finished explaining the bill."

Carlson said Republican members would have a chance to debate the bills and present any amendments in the House Ways and Means Committee, where the bills are headed next.

— N. BUSSE

An unhealthy split

The \$10 billion bill meets with Republican protests

By MIA SIMPSON

One of the lead proposals in the omnibus health care and human services finance bill was under attack for much of the April 20 House floor debate.

Republican members called the health care provision, known as “Cover all Kids,” unaffordable and unsustainable, an assessment they also gave to the bill as a whole.

“You can’t tax enough to make these promises come true,” said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague).

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF297/SF2171](#)* would spend about \$10 billion of General Fund money in the 2008-09 biennium for health care, mental health and public health initiatives, nursing homes, welfare reforms, child care and dozens of miscellaneous items. The bill passed 86-45 in the wee hours of April 21. The Senate passed the measure 42-23 March 29.

The legislation now sits in conference committee.

From kids to seniors

The “Cover all Kids” provision, would cost \$99 million in the next biennium and \$373 million in fiscal years 2010-11. Its sponsor, [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), insisted the proposal would ensure presumptive eligibility, therefore guaranteeing that every child who enters a hospital has his or her care paid.

“This doesn’t tinker around the edges,” Thissen said. “This gets the job done.”

The omnibus bill also tries to get the job done for nursing homes. The bill calls for a 3 percent payment increase in each of the next two fiscal years, at a cost of \$138 million. Nursing homes would also have their funding reapportioned statewide in 2010 and beyond, thus decreasing the reimbursement gap

between urban and rural facilities.

“It is a welcome rain after a very long drought,” [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley) said.

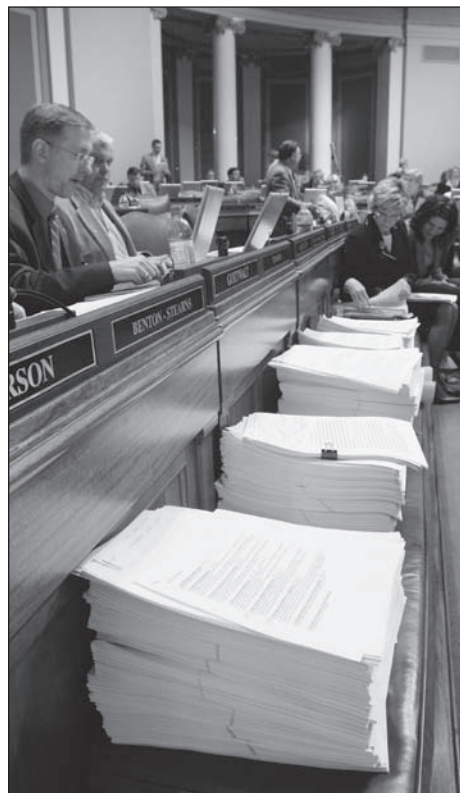


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The piles of amendments to the omnibus health care and human services finance bill foretell the 11-hour debate on the House floor April 20-21.

A Quick Look SF2171

Focus: Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Veterans Home Board and other health-related boards.

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$10 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

“Cover all Kids”	\$10 mil.
Nursing home payments	\$138 mil.
Mental health	\$45 mil.
Medical Assistance asset expansion ...	\$28 mil.
County assistance	\$38 mil.
Disability waivers/programs	\$12.2 mil.
Child care	\$18 mil.
Veterans Home Board	\$14.8 mil.

Selected policy provisions:

- 125 plans to allow employees to buy health care with pre-tax dollars
- [HF1](#), sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), to provide insurance for all Minnesota children
- health care pilots for medical homes, care coordination, treatment incentives and expanded coverage
- e-Health to establish interoperable electronic health records
- new environmental studies and tracking of toxins
- expanded benefits set for mental health treatment
- buy down waiting lists for child care subsidies and disability programs
- adjustments in work requirements for MFIP recipients

Republican members repeatedly failed to affect both areas of spending in the bill — first by attempting to replace “Cover all Kids” provisions with the governor’s health care proposal, and second by reallocating funding given to other programs, including the Minnesota Family Investment Program, to nursing homes.

“There’s a legitimate difference of opinion about taking all that money and putting it toward MFIP when, in fact, it could go toward something else,” [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) said.

Republicans protested many of the proposed changes to the state welfare program. The proposal would reduce work requirements for certain recipients, increase program eligibility



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Thomas Huntley addresses the House during the April 20 debate on the omnibus health care and human services finance bill. The bill passed 86-45, and is now in a conference committee.

from 115 percent to 140 percent and repeal two penalties imposed in 2003.

“This goes in the direction of dependence, not independence,” said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), who successfully added language that would prohibit MFIP participants from using cash assistance for alcohol and cigarettes. “Welfare’s purpose is to eliminate, as far as possible, the need for its own existence. Members, this bill goes in the opposite direction.”

Democrats defended their choices. They said, in the instance of health care, Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s health care proposal, called “Healthy Connections,” doesn’t go far enough.

“The governor’s proposal only covers 14,000 out of more than 77,000 uninsured kids,” Thissen said. “That’s less than one in five.”

DFLers also criticized repeated attempts to move Health Care Access Fund and federal

welfare money into programs for which they claim the money isn’t intended.

“There you go again,” Huntley said. “Taking (money) and moving it to the bottom line.”

Huntley also emphasized the bill’s similarities, particularly in health care, with the governor’s proposal.

Both include the Health Insurance Exchange, which would, in part, allow people to use pre-tax dollars to buy health insurance; QCare, which would establish quality care standards for some chronic conditions; and money

for an interoperable electronic health record system.

Also on the hotplate was about \$5 million in funding to family planning programs, which provide,

among other things, services to pregnant women seeking abortions.

An amendment offered by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie) that would have prohibited state funding for most abortions

failed 68-64.

Other items in the bill include:

- \$45 million for mental health initiatives, including a model benefit set that would expand coverage to mental health care in MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance and General Assistance Medical Care programs;
- aspects of the omnibus housing and public health finance bill, including \$2 million for an environmental health tracking and biomonitoring system — [HF1621](#), sponsored by [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) — that would determine relationships between environmental hazards and disease; and
- aspects of the omnibus early childhood learning finance bill, including a 2 percent rate increase for child care providers.



“There’s a legitimate difference of opinion about taking all that money and putting it toward MFIP when, in fact, it could go toward something else.”

— Rep. Steve Gottwalt

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

State agency funding

Election conveniences and domestic partner benefits included

BY PATTY OSTBERG

House and Senate conferees are meeting to work out differences in what will become the omnibus state government finance bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), [HF953/SF1997*](#) would make several state policy changes and appropriate money for state operations. The House plan calls for \$544.5 million in General Fund spending — \$102.2 million less than the governor's recommendation, but \$23 million more than the Senate recommendation.

The bill, which contained the original House language, was passed 68-64 April 19. The Senate version was approved 42-20 March 24 by that body.

What could have been hours of debate on the House floor April 19 instead came screeching to a halt as the Republican minority offered few amendments to the bill and pulled nearly 70 others.

"There are numerous items in this bill that are wedge issues," said [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall). The minority pulled the amendments to avoid prolonged House debate on a bill that "in no way will be signed by the governor," he said.

"We will continue to extend our offer to compromise with the other side of the aisle and the Governor to make these bills and the final product good for all of Minnesota," [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) said.

Agency funding

Under the House plan, state agencies would receive much of their funding needs for staffing and general operational costs. The

bill includes a salary increase of 3.25 percent for state employees in fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

The bill assumes \$104 million in revenue gains from technology carryforward funds, the governor's and House tax compliance initiatives and audit fees. The Department of Revenue would be expected to increase

tax collection, but opponents say the department is not staffed to do so, and therefore the collection target is unattainable.

The Office of Enterprise

Technology would receive \$23.3 million. Of that, the House version would appropriate \$2 million to begin the first phase of an electronic licensing system, but the Senate plan has no money for this. The governor's budget includes \$15 million for the project "to satisfy growing citizen demand for online government services," according to his budget recommendation report. Additional money for the office, in the House plan, includes funding for information technology security, small-agency technology infrastructure and an electronic documents study and report.

The House plan allocates \$51.4 million

A Quick Look SF1997

Focus: Legislature, Governor's office, State Auditor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, Investment Board, Administrative Hearings Office, Office of Enterprise Technology, Department of Administration, Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, Department of Finance, Department of Employee Relations, Department of Revenue, Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, Council on Black Minnesotans, Chicano-Latino Affairs Council, Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, Minnesota State Retirement System, Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund, Minneapolis Teachers Retirement, St. Paul Teachers Retirement Fund Association

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$544.5 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

House, Senate and	
Legislative Coordinating Commission.....	\$137.4 mil.
Governor.....	\$7.4 mil.
State Auditor.....	\$18.5 mil.
Attorney General.....	\$49 mil.
Secretary of State.....	\$13.6 mil.
Office of Enterprise Technology.....	\$23.3 mil.
Department of Administration.....	\$51.4 mil.
Department of Finance.....	\$37.7 mil.
Department of Employee Relations.....	\$12.3 mil.
Department of Revenue.....	\$245.8 mil.

Selected policy provisions:

- requires the governor to reduce the number of deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, and other unclassified positions
- creates a Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness
- creates a Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans
- automatic voter registration when applying for a driver's license
- ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter
- establishes procedures for governing management of grants made by state agencies
- gives full compensation to current state employees for losses due to the 2005 state government shutdown
- gives domestic partner health benefits to state employees
- defines best value for state contracts



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Rep. Phyllis Kahn, cosponsor of the omnibus state government finance bill, spoke April 19 during the floor debate on the bill that would fund state government. The bill would also provide health insurance benefits to domestic partners of state employees, a provision that the governor has said could place the bill in jeopardy of a veto.

to the Department of Administration and its subdivisions for projects, including \$2.5 million to purchase a Web-enabled real estate management system that would allow state agencies to more efficiently track space needs in state-owned buildings. The governor proposes \$6.7 million for the project; the Senate zero. Other money in the House plan would fund activities to promote and prepare for the 2010 census, the Land Management Information Center and the Office of the State

Archaeologist, and establishment of an Office of Grants Management.

New commissions would be created under the House plan, including the Minnesota Office of Ethnic Heritage and New Americans and the Legislative Commission on Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. The Senate proposal includes funding for a similar heritage commission.

According to the House bill, the heritage office would “assist state government to

foster an understanding and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity in Minnesota.” The commission on terrorism would advise and make policy recommendations on issues related to homeland security and emergency management.

Policy changes

Domestic partners of state employees would be offered insurance in collective bargaining agreements or plans that also provide state-paid health insurance for spouses of employees, under the bill. A domestic partner would be defined to include a person who has entered into a committed interdependent relationship with another adult where the partners are responsible for each other’s basic common welfare, share a common residence and intend to do so indefinitely, and are not related by blood or adoption that would prohibit marriage. Provision opponents have said the governor would veto the bill if this provision is in the final product.

A number of policy changes regarding elections are included. For example, the bill would allow for automatic voter registration when applying for a driver’s license; lease agreements could be used as forms of identification for Election Day registration; voter registration and active status information would be provided on the Office of the Secretary of State Web site; and ongoing absentee status for any eligible voter would be provided.

One provision would help military personnel serving overseas have a better chance of having their absentee ballot counted.

Currently the process is mail out/mail back, but the bill would provide for the ballot to be e-mailed, with the completed ballot mailed back. The change would also apply to individuals working overseas who claim Minnesota as residency.

The House and Senate would be required to adopt rules requiring committees of the same jurisdictions to meet at coordinating times, and a regular hour for convening daily sessions in both houses. Also under the bill, parking in front of the State Capitol building would be reserved for the public. Currently, the area is reserved for Senate members and some staff during session. 🏛️

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Taxing the rich to give to the poor

Omnibus tax bill is not well received by Republican minority

By SONJA HEGMAN

Minnesota became Sherwood Forest for a day as [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) argued that a provision in the House omnibus tax bill would steal from the rich.

“What we’re talking about here is robbery,” he said in the House Taxes Committee April 24 of the provision what would create a fourth tier tax bracket. “(This bill) takes money from the wealthy and gives it to another group of people.”

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) was not about to be outdone.

“If I’m Robin Hood, I suppose you’re the Sheriff of Nottingham,” he said.

The bill, [HF2362](#), sponsored by House Taxes Committee Chairwoman [Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), would create a new top income tax rate of 9 percent for married couples filing joint returns who earn more than \$400,000 a year and for single taxpayers with incomes above \$226,000. The current top rate is 7.85 percent.

A Kohls amendment to delete the new tax rate was opposed in a 17-9 roll call vote. About 20 amendments were presented during the three-hour markup of the bill. Several were adopted before the bill was passed April 24 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee, which approved the measure the next day. It was scheduled to be heard on the House floor April 27. The Senate omnibus tax bill, [SF1024](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom M. Bakk](#) (DFL-Cook), was approved 38-28 by that body March 30.

Though the bill passed out of the taxes committee, during an April 25 House floor session, [Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie), a member of the tax committee, unsuccessfully offered a minority tax report to replace Lenczewski’s majority report.

“Members, let’s get real here today,” Paulsen said. “We’re not leaving session with a tax increase. Let’s get this done right today. It’s really a matter of prioritizing spending. I’m

offering this today so we can at least have this discussion.”

He continued by saying the \$1 billion surplus for the 2008-09 biennium could be used to provide tax relief instead of increasing income taxes by \$452 million with the new tax tier.

“The main issue is property tax relief,” said [Rep. Paul Marquart](#) (DFL-Dilworth). “Do you want to vote for huge property tax increases today or wait until Friday to provide relief?”

At the end of January, Marquart opened a property tax hot line to collect comments

from citizens around the state. The line was open for about two months and generated 750 comments via phone or e-mail.

“Haven’t we heard anything from the public? This minority report tells our property owners to take a hike. The plan on (Friday’s floor session) will tell property taxpayers, ‘We hear you. We will provide property tax cuts to you,’” he said.

A second minority report, offered after House Ways and Means Committee approval, included the governor’s tax plan and a return of the state surplus in the form of property tax relief. It was defeated 84-49 April 26 on the House floor.

Property tax relief

The bill would raise an estimated \$452 million over the next two years. That revenue would be used to cut property taxes for 90 percent of Minnesota homeowners, Lenczewski said.

It would also provide state refunds to homeowners whose property taxes exceed 2 percent of their household income. The refunds would range from \$250 to



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

No tax subsidies for the Mall of America expansion are in the House omnibus tax bill. The Senate bill provides tax breaks for the project.

Other provisions in the tax bill

After testimony on more than 300 bills, the omnibus tax bill would also:

- provide a one-time credit of up to \$50,000 for expenditures made to modernize dairy animal operations in the state. The credit would equal 10 percent of expenditures in tax years 2007 through 2012;
- establish a FARMZ program as part of the Job Opportunity Building Zones. This would allow the Department of Employment and Economic Development to transfer existing JOBZ parcels to qualifying farm sites, providing JOBZ benefits for on-farm agricultural processing facilities;
- shield disabled veterans from property taxes, allowing those who are totally disabled to exclude up to \$300,000 of their home's market value from taxation. The benefit would carry over to a spouse after the veteran's death;
- eliminate the provisions that give tax breaks to companies with foreign operations;
- increase the maximum renter's property tax refund by 6 percent, topping out at \$1,500. Income eligibility would increase as well, to \$60,000 from \$50,160;
- establish an annual \$1 million bioscience business grant program, administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development; and
- provide partial or total sales tax exemptions for construction materials used in, and equipment incorporated into, a number of water and wastewater treatment facilities for individual cities. These cities were required to build the facilities to meet environmental standards. The cities may apply for a refund of 50 percent of the tax actually paid on these facilities; however, the city of Harris may apply for a refund of 100 percent of the tax.

\$2,500. Households with annual incomes up to \$150,000 would be eligible for the reimbursement.

Marquart, who sponsored the property tax division report, said it also would strongly link the tax with the ability to pay; addressing what he said is the biggest complaint about the property tax.

Some of the relief would come in the form of increased aid to local governments and school districts, he said, but homeowners in 2008 also would see an actual drop in their property taxes from 2007 amounts.

Lenczewski said property tax relief is the core of the tax bill. She has said raising income taxes on the relatively wealthy would make the state's tax system fairer.

The House bill does not provide tax subsidies to expand the Mall of America in Bloomington and the Thomson West legal publishing complex in Eagan. The Senate bill provides tax breaks to both projects. It would authorize the City of Eagan to create

Tax break proposed for disabled veterans

The House omnibus tax bill includes a provision that would provide a real estate tax break for disabled veterans who are homeowners. The charts below show the effect of the provision on a homestead in the Twin Cities metropolitan area compared to one in Greater Minnesota.

Disabled veteran's homestead (using Metropolitan area average home value and tax rate)

		Current Law	Proposed Law
50% Disability rating	Taxable value	\$283,500	\$183,500
	Net tax	\$3,068	\$2,016
70% Disability rating	Taxable value	\$283,500	\$133,500
	Net tax	\$3,068	\$1,466
100% Permanent disability	Taxable value	\$283,500	\$0
	Net tax	\$3,068	\$0

Disabled veteran's homestead (using Greater Minnesota average home value and tax rate)

		Current Law	Proposed Law
50% Disability rating	Taxable value	\$164,100	\$64,100
	Net tax	\$1,557	\$667
70% Disability rating	Taxable value	\$164,100	\$14,100
	Net tax	\$1,557	\$147
100% Permanent disability	Taxable value	\$164,100	\$0
	Net tax	\$1,557	\$0

Source: House Research Department

a tax increment financing district that could divert property taxes from the Thomson West expansion to pay for streets, parking, sewer, water and other improvements on the site.

Other property tax provisions would:

- provide full or partial valuation exclusion for homesteads of disabled veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or greater;
- reduce the class rate for rental duplexes and triplexes to the same class rate structure that applies to homesteads and single-unit rental properties;
- reduce the property classification rate for qualifying nonprofit community service-oriented organizations, like VFWs and American Legions;
- extend the time for filing property tax refund claims for homeowners and renters by one year;
- allow homestead property owners to pay their property tax in eight equal installments, rather than the current two payments;
- expand eligibility for the senior citizens property tax deferral program;
- establish a seasonal recreational property tax deferral program;
- reinstitute the "this old house" program, which excludes the increase in value due to a new improvement made to an older home for 10 years; and

- require cities with a population of more than 2,500 and counties to prepare and send a supplemental proposed property tax notice under certain circumstances.

Local aids

Over the next two years, the bill would increase state aid to cities, counties and townships.

The local government aid portion would increase by \$60 million in 2008. Modifications to the program would:

- increase the city aid base portion of LGA for Newport, Taylors Falls, Rockville and Browns Valley;
- provide a \$3 per capita LGA payment to towns beginning with aids payable in 2008;
- provide that aid formulas reflect changes in property tax bases caused by utility property valuations and the casino in Mahanomen in a timely fashion;
- increase the appropriation for county program aid by \$24 million for aids payable in 2008, an increase of approximately 11.7 percent over current law;
- provide for an inflation adjustment for city LGA and county program aid appropriations. The size of the adjustment depends on city organizations developing a consensus on the LGA formula in the future.

"What we're talking about here is robbery. (This bill) takes money from the wealthy and gives it to another group of people."

— Rep. Paul Kohls

Funding postsecondary education

Higher education bill includes controversial provision

By CRAIG GREEN AND MIKE COOK

The end of double-digit tuition increases could be on the horizon.

That is the point again repeated by supporters of the omnibus higher education finance bill, which is now in the hands of a 10-member conference committee.

However, some say the bill is on an almost assured crash course with Gov. Tim Pawlenty because of a single provision: the Dream Act.

Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul) indicated at the first gathering April 23 that its conference committee report is expected by early next week.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), HF797 calls for nearly \$3.21 billion in spending for the 2008-09 biennium. Sponsored by Pappas, SF1989 is about \$107.7 million less. The governor's recommendation is about \$2.5 million below the House number. The House has some one-time money in its bill; the Senate does not.

In all cases, the majority of the funds would be directed to the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Advocates say the additional money is expected to keep tuition increases below 5 percent each year, after collegiate costs for many students have increased by more than 70 percent in the past five years. The House bill also contains \$12.4 million in fiscal year 2009 for the university to reduce tuition increases.

Conferees again met April 25, but were reluctant to adopt more than technical, nonmonetary changes. Talk about differing policy provisions was to occur April 26, but conferees would likely not adopt anything until a conference committee target is received from leadership the next day.

In addition to funding differences, provisions yet to be resolved include ways to reduce textbook costs to students, veterans benefits, marketing credit cards to students, the creation of a Legislative Commission on Postsecondary Funding, changes in the selection process for the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, additional membership on the MnSCU Board of Trustees, regulation of private postsecondary institutions and assessments for 10th and 11th grade students to ensure that passing scores on math, reading and language arts tests represent college readiness.

Potential problematic provision

Arguably, the most controversial issue to be addressed is a provision that could doom the entire package to failure — the Dream Act.

Among the amendments unsuccessfully offered by Republicans during the April 19 House floor debate, three tried to change or eliminate the provision. On more than one occasion, Pawlenty has promised to veto the bill if it contains the act.

Under the provision, illegal immigrants would be eligible for resident tuition at all public higher education institutions in Minnesota if they meet four criteria: at least

A Quick Look SF1989

Focus: University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Office of Higher Education, Mayo Foundation

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$3.1 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

University of Minnesota	\$1.38 bil.
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities	\$1.34 bil.
Office of Higher Education.....	\$377.6 mil.
Mayo Foundation.....	\$2.25 mil.

Selected policy provisions in House bill, but yet to be agreed upon by conference committee:

- tuition freeze at MnSCU campuses in 2009
- no state funds could be used to buy out the contract of a collegiate coach
- colleges and universities cannot accommodate a specific religious group without making an equal appropriation to other religious groups requesting accommodations
- establishment of an India Center at the University of Minnesota

three years of attendance at a Minnesota high school, graduation from a state high school or attainment of a GED in the state, registration or enrollment at a public higher education institution and the filing of an affidavit indicating they have filed an application to legalize their citizenship or will at the earliest opportunity they are eligible to do so.

Under the Senate offer, these students would be eligible to receive a scholarship or financial aid provided by private sources or an institution, unless immigration status is an eligibility criterion. Conferees nearly took up the provision April 25 before choosing otherwise. The House plan does not include this.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), who unsuccessfully sought to remove the language on the House floor, said it would go against

"This is not a partisan issue. ... This is not an ideological issue. This is a common sense issue."

— Rep. Carlos Mariani



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina, left, and Sen. Sandy Pappas, chairs of the Higher Education Finance Conference Committee, begin the process by going line-by-line through the two bills during the first meeting of the committee April 23.

federal law, and as all House representatives have taken an oath to uphold the Constitution, it would be wrong to allow it to pass. He also pointed out that there are currently 13 higher education institutions in the state that offer resident tuition to these students.

The amendment was defeated 71-61.

“This is not a partisan issue. ... This is not an ideological issue. This is a common sense issue,” said [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St.

Paul), the sponsor of [HF722](#). In addition to mentioning that a number of Republican House members co-sponsor the bill, he noted that similar statutes have been passed across the country. Mariani also said that the fiscal impact would be nominal, while Severson argued that it could possibly cost the state \$8 million a year.

Severson said that even if these students get a college education, because of their illegal

status, once they graduate they will not be able to work legally in the United States. “We’re going to give them a diploma and then say, ‘Go ahead and try and get a nursing license.’ Ain’t gonna happen.”

[Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings) and [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) offered other changes to the Dream Act, but both were voted down. 🗳️

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The invaders

Exotic species threaten state ecology, economy

By Nick Busse

By land, sea and air, Minnesota is being invaded. Bullfrogs, bugs, snails, fishes, birds, trees and even flowers — the invaders come in all shapes and sizes. Some of them have been here for decades; others are still hundreds of miles away, gradually working their way to our borders.

They're called invasive species, also known as "exotic" or "nonindigenous" species. They're not supposed to be here, but they are. Some hitch a ride in the ballast tanks of oceangoing ships and find their way into our lakes and rivers; others are mistakenly introduced halfway across the country and simply migrate here over time.

Invasive species push out native plants and animals, alter the state's natural habitat and generally cause ecological and economic disruptions. Some, like the fish-killing sea lampreys that inhabit Lake Superior, pose a serious threat to commercial and business interests. Each year, a joint U.S.-Canadian commission spends approximately \$16 million to control Great Lakes lamprey populations, which threaten the region's multi-billion dollar fisheries industry.

Others, like Eurasian water milfoil, are mostly an annoyance; however, even annoyances make an impact. Milfoil, a resilient invasive aquatic plant, has reduced the area suitable for swimming, boating and fishing on 190 lakes in the state — including 13 new ones in 2006, according to the [Department of Natural Resources](#).

New threats on the horizon

"Some of the No. 1 concerns people have aren't the ecological impacts, but the recreational impacts," said Luke Skinner,

terrestrial invasive plant program coordinator for the department.

Skinner is one among a relatively small number of state employees whose job it is to help mitigate the harmful effects of invasive species — a responsibility that falls primarily to the DNR and the [Department of Agriculture](#). Skinner said his department focuses mostly on wild animals and invasive aquatic species, while the agriculture department focuses on invasive terrestrial plants.

Dealing with invasive species is tricky; only some species can be controlled or eradicated. And with dozens of species in need of attention and limited funding to go around, Skinner said the department has to prioritize.

What's worse, some of the biggest threats are looming just over the horizon — literally.

In Michigan, for example, an Asian beetle known as emerald ash borer has ravaged ash tree populations, killing an estimated five million trees in the Detroit area alone, and is slowly spreading westward. Meanwhile, throughout

the eastern Great Lakes, a deadly fish disease known as viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS virus, has raised growing alarm among fisheries and environmental advocates alike. Sometimes referred to as "Ebola for fish," the virus causes internal hemorrhaging and has been responsible for massive fish kills in lakes Erie, Huron and Ontario.

Whether they eventually reach the state, these new threats are a sign that the problem is here to stay, and may actually be getting worse. And while efforts are underway to better address the issue through legislation, experts say they also need the help of an active and informed public to stop the spread of invasive species.

Education vs. management

DNR Conservation Officer Ken Soring relates a story about a fellow officer who spotted aquatic vegetation hanging off of a boat trailer near Grand Rapids last summer. The officer stopped and informed the driver that it was illegal — the plant was an invasive species. He thanked the officer, who let him off with a warning. But later that same day, the same officer spotted the same driver at a boat launch, getting ready to back the trailer into a lake — with the plant still stuck to it. This time, a citation was issued.

"That to me shows the extreme and hopefully rare noncompliance and nonconcern," Soring said.

Soring, who works on statewide invasive species enforcement efforts for the department, said that such instances of carelessness are the exception rather than the rule. But the story does illustrate what might be the two biggest obstacles to controlling the spread of invasive species in the state: public awareness and willingness to comply with sometimes inconvenient state laws.

For example, anglers are now required to drain their bait buckets and live wells after fishing in certain water bodies infested with zebra mussels, such as Mille Lacs Lake. It's a step that's necessary to prevent the spread of the mussels — pesky organisms for which there are no known means of control or eradication — but Soring said many anglers find it irritating.

"When you're fishing those waters, it takes an extra step in the process. ... Anytime



Gypsy moths



you require that extra step in order to be in compliance, it takes a little time to get people up to speed,” he said.

The DNR has attempted to raise public awareness about the danger of spreading invasive species via radio and TV ads, billboards, lawn signs, news releases, informational signs posted at boat launches and through one-on-one contact with members of the public. Skinner said such efforts are crucial.

“Our main thing is to train people and educate people so they really know about invasives and they’ll take those precautions. It’s a behavior change, so they start cleaning their equipment, they start looking for these things.”

Controlling the problem

Prevention efforts don’t always work, and controlling invasive species once they have already established themselves is often difficult. The options are usually limited, and total eradication of an invasive species is virtually impossible; however, there are a few success stories.

Chemicals designed to target specific species with minimal impact to other organisms, for example, have been successfully used against certain invasive aquatic species, such as lampreys. In addition, invasive species can sometimes be controlled through the use of animals or insects prone to killing that species — a method known as “biological control.”

Skinner gives the example of purple loosestrife — a plant that takes over wetlands. Since 1992, purple loosestrife has been effectively controlled through the release of certain insect species that consume and destroy the plant. Approximately 8.8 million leaf-eating beetles have been released at infestation sites around the state, often resulting in significant defoliation of the plant. Although the insects do not eradicate the plant completely, Skinner said they do manage it effectively.

Invasive species programs are likely to get a funding boost from this year’s state budget. The omnibus environment, energy and natural resources finance bill ([HF2410/SF2096*](#)), sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), contains new money and provisions to combat invasive aquatic species, shade tree pests (including emerald ash borer) and Asian carp.

For her part, Wagenius thinks biological controls are the way of the future.



Emerald ash borer



Courtesy: John D. Byrd, Mississippi State University, [www.forestryimages.org](#).

Purple loosestrife: native to Europe and Asia, this invasive wetland plant was introduced to North America during the 1800s and has been located in 68 of the state’s 87 counties, with some 2,000 recorded infestations in the state. Purple loosestrife crowds out native plants and reduces wildlife habitat.

“The problem is much bigger than just a traditional funding issue. We have to look at more bio-controls. That means a lot more science,” she said.

Wagenius said her division will likely hold an all-day conference on invasive species this fall, with the intention of examining “all the layers of the problem” and how best to

approach it from a legislative perspective.



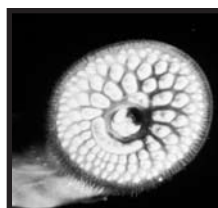
Emerald ash borer image

Courtesy: David Cappaert, [www.forestryimages.org](#)

Gypsy moth image

male(left) and female (right) Asian gypsy moths

Courtesy: USDA APHIS PPQ Archives, USDA APHIS PPQ, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Sea Lamprey

According to the DNR Web site, the eel-like sea lamprey is “historically the most devastating invader in the Great Lakes.” Using its suction-cup-like mouth to feed on the blood of host fish, a single lamprey can kill as much as 40 pounds of fish in its lifetime. A joint U.S.-Canadian program has successfully reduced Great Lakes lamprey populations by 90 percent — at an average cost of \$16 million annually.

Courtesy: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Archives, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Eurasian Water Milfoil

First discovered in Lake Minnetonka in 1987, Eurasian water milfoil hampers recreational activities like swimming and boating and crowds out native plant species. The plant spreads easily; even a small fragment is enough to take root and establish a new colony. The DNR cites 190 water bodies in the state that are known to contain milfoil.

Courtesy: Alison Fox, University of Florida, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Round Goby

The bottom-dwelling round goby pushes out native fish species by out-competing them for food and habitat and eating their eggs, negatively impacting commercial and sport fishing. It can currently be found throughout the Great Lakes and the St. Louis River, although it has yet to spread to Minnesota’s inland lakes.

Courtesy: Center for Great Lakes and Aquatic Sciences Archives, University of Michigan, [www.forestryimages.org](#)



Zebra Mussels

Roughly the size of a fingernail, zebra mussels litter beaches, clog water intakes on ships, push out native mussel species and contribute to fish and wildlife die-offs. Native to Eastern Europe, they were introduced into the Great Lakes in the late-1980s and have since spread throughout the Mississippi River and into numerous inland lakes. Infestations are virtually impossible to eliminate once established.

Courtesy: U.S. Geological Survey Archives, U.S. Geological Survey, [www.forestryimages.org](#)

Friday, April 20

HF2444-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Finance

Benson; Pacific Avenue pavement funding provided.

HF2445-Davnie (DFL)

Taxes

Bioscience zones tax increments permitted use expanded.

HF2446-Howes (R)

Taxes

Emily wastewater treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

Monday, April 23

HF2447-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Bear hunting special permits authorized for scientific, conservation and educational purposes.

HF2448-Morrow (DFL)

Finance

Biofuel; lignocellulosic ethanol production grant authorized.

HF2449-Sertich (DFL)

Finance

Hibbing Memorial Building expansion funding provided.

HF2450-Hansen (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Farmed cervidae harvesting on licensed shooting preserves regulated.

HF2451-Nelson (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minnesota public pension plans; selection of a joint and survivor annuity benefit required if provided for under the plan.

HF2452-Rukavina (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee group insurance plan provider classification condition specified, and data release required.

Tuesday, April 24

HF2453-Thissen (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Minneapolis Firefighters' Relief Association post-retirement adjustment investment modified.

Wednesday, April 25

HF2454-Brod (R)

Transportation Finance Division

Death certificates data expanded and protected, and surviving family members provided access to crashed vehicles.

HF2455-Olin (DFL)

Finance

Warroad; street lights and fish-cleaning house funding provided to replace facilities damaged by tornado.

Thursday, April 26

HF2456-Ward (DFL)

Finance

Brainerd; veterans nursing home design funding provided on the Brainerd Regional Treatment Center site.

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2007-08 Minnesota Senate

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

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Minnesota House and Senate

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Growing organics

In 2006, number of certified organic farms in Minnesota	530
In 2000	382
By percent, growth between 2000 and 2005 in the number of certified organic acres in the state	57
In 2005, number of certified organic acres in Minnesota	129,064
In millions, total number of certified organic acres in U.S.	4.4
Minnesota's rank nationally in terms of total certified organic acres	6
By acre, average organic farm size in Minnesota	324
By acre, average farm size in state	345
State ranking for organic acres in corn	1
State ranking for organically fed beef cows	10
From 1997-2005, years Minnesota ranked No. 1 for number of organic soybean acres planted	6
In 2005, amount of sales nationally in organic food, in billions	\$13.8
By percent, the annual increase nationally in sales of organic food and beverages between 1997 and 2005	18
National sales, in millions, of fastest growing organic food sector in 2005 (meat/fish/poultry)	\$256
Predicted annual sales dollar growth between 2004-2008, by percent	20.7
2005 sales, in millions, of organic pet food	\$30
Sales, in millions, of organic personal care products	\$282
Year Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act	1990
Year that, for the first time, all 50 states reported having certified organic farms	1995
Number of operations in state with most certified operations (California) in 2005	1,738
Certified organic acres, in millions, of pastureland in state with largest amount (Alaska) in 2005	1.46
In bushels, yield per acre of organically grown corn in Minnesota	142
Non-organic	179
Number of farmers markets in 2007 listed with Minnesota Grown	85
Percentage of U.S. food shoppers who say they buy organics at least occasionally	44

— L. SCHUTZ

Sources: 2006-The Status of Organic Agriculture in Minnesota; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; United States Department of Agriculture.

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