

SESSION WEEKLY

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BUDGET REACTIONS
BILLS ON THE MOVE**

HF228- HF366

SESSION WEEKLY

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

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On the cover: From left: Reps. Erik Paulsen, Dean Simpson, Kurt Zellers, Joe Mullery, Paul Marquart, Denise Dittrich, Diane Loeffler and Lyle Koenen listen to a presentation of the property tax portion of the governor's budget proposal during a Jan. 24 joint hearing of the House Taxes Committee and its Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

A bigger budget

Pawlenty calls for a \$3 billion spending increase — but no new taxes



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Gov. Tim Pawlenty released his proposed budget at the Department of Revenue Jan. 22.

By Nick Busse

[Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) unveiled his [budget proposal](#) Jan. 22, calling for a record \$34.4 billion in state spending over the next two years — a nearly \$3 billion increase, with the bulk of the new money going to education, health care and tax relief.

Pawlenty's proposal would take advantage of a projected \$2.2 billion budget surplus to beef up spending without raising taxes. In addition, the governor said his budget would emphasize pay-for-performance initiatives in key areas, especially education.

"Minnesota should stop paying for good intentions and start paying for better performance," Pawlenty said. "We want to measure the results; we want to measure not just how much we're spending, but what are we getting for it."

In brief, Pawlenty's plan would provide an extra \$714 million for K-12 education, \$414 million for higher education, \$281 million for tax relief, \$274 million for health care reforms, \$213 million for new investments in technology, and \$40 million for the governor's "Next Generation Energy Plan," which focuses on renewable energy sources.

Also included is a \$75 million veterans and military package that would exempt military pay and pensions from the state income tax, and also provide new education benefits and funding for veterans' programs.

Cautious reaction

Reaction to the governor's recommendations by the new DFL majority in the House has been cautious for the most part, with [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) praising his proposals as "a good starting point," but also making it clear that Democrats disagree with the governor on a number of key issues.

"We were disappointed that there's no plan to implement an all-day, every day kindergarten. ... There's no plan in this budget for covering all Minnesota children with health care, nor is there really leadership on the transportation issue," Kelliher said.

House Republicans, meanwhile, offered their own critical take on Pawlenty's budget proposals. [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) called for more tax relief and less spending, asking the governor to "put the taxpayer first."

What follows are select highlights of the governor's Fiscal Year 2008-09 budget recommendations and policy initiatives, along with some responses from House leadership and committee chairs.

K-12 education

In the K-12 arena, Pawlenty's budget recommendations focus on pay-for-performance incentives. In addition to a one-time, 2 percent per year basic revenue increase for all schools, the governor's "Successful Schools" initiative would give an extra 2 percent per year to schools that achieve a three-star rating or better in reading or math on their state school report cards.

Other initiatives include expanded funding for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, expansion of the Q-Comp performance pay for educators program, and \$75 million for the governor's "3R" (rigor, relevance and results) high schools program, in which participating schools would agree to provide students access to college-level courses and work internships.

DFL leaders expressed skepticism about the governor's overall approach to education funding.

First Reading continued on page 4

“What I heard in the governor’s State of the State speech last week was a commitment to put more money into education and into funding our classrooms,” said [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm). “So far, what I’ve seen in [the governor’s budget], the numbers don’t add up to what he said last week.”

Early childhood

For early childhood education, Pawlenty proposes a \$28.9 million scholarship program to provide “at-risk” pre-kindergarteners the opportunity to attend approved early childhood programs, as well as an additional \$9 million to help improve early childhood education quality.

Higher education

The governor’s budget adds \$153 million in new funding for the University of Minnesota, primarily for research purposes. Funding for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System could increase by \$123 million. In addition, both the university and MnSCU could be eligible for an additional \$25 million each, providing that they achieve certain “performance measurements.”

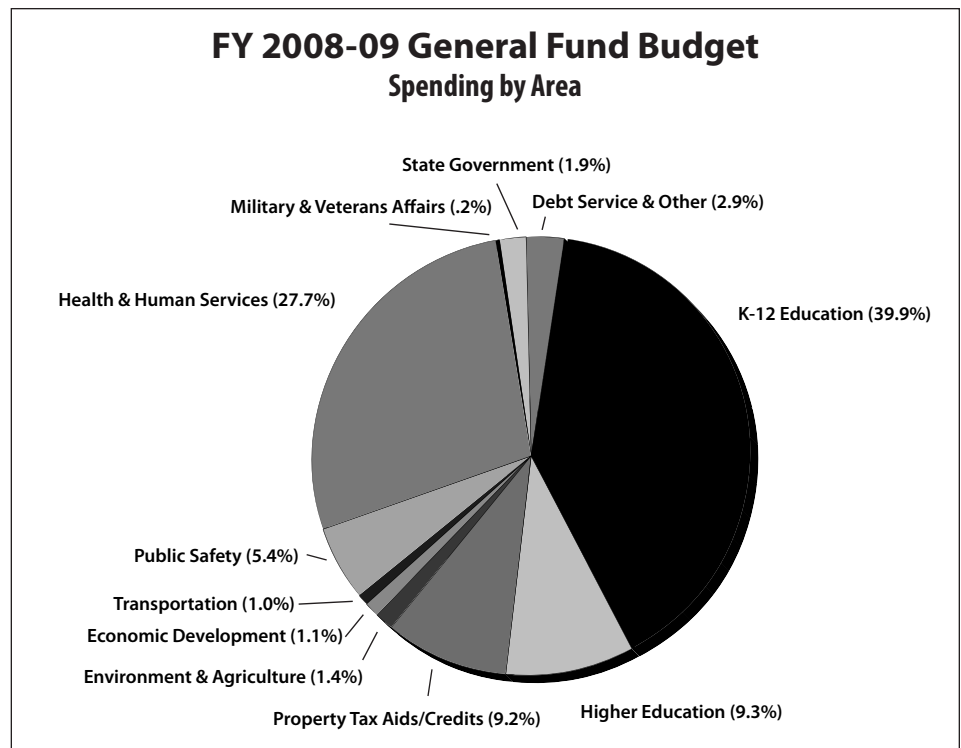
Pawlenty’s proposed budget would also create two new financial aid programs: the so-called “Minnesota GI Bill,” which would provide up to \$2,000 per year in postsecondary education benefits to eligible veterans and their dependents; and ACHIEVE II, which would grant scholarships to certain high school students who take rigorous courses.

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), chairman of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division of the House Finance Committee, said he is pleased that the governor is proposing new money for higher education, but warned that “whether or not that money ends up in this budget where the governor proposed, it is a different story altogether.” He added that he would like to see more money set aside for keeping down tuition rates.

Taxes

Property tax relief, one of the main issues in last year’s election, is addressed in the governor’s budget recommendations with a \$150 million package that would grant homestead market value credits, increase local government aid and the state’s share of public school operating levies, and distribute property tax refunds.

The local government aid portion of the package is likely to become a point of contention between Republicans and



Source: Department of Finance

Democrats. Pawlenty proposes a property tax cap on cities and counties that receive more than a third of their total general fund revenues from the state; also, for cities with populations greater than 100,000, he proposes that any new local government aid money be used for public safety purposes.

“We’ve heard the concern about public safety being such a priority, and they always entangle the [local government assistance] debate with, ‘Well, we can’t do what we want to do in public safety because we’re not getting more LGA money,’” Pawlenty said. “Well, now we’re giving them LGA money, and we’re challenging them to put it where they said it was most important.”

Although she stopped short of discussing the individual provisions of the governor’s budget, Kelliher said that House Democrats “certainly will have some other ways to put together a property tax package for Minnesotans.”

[Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee,

also indicated that her committee would carefully scrutinize the governor’s proposal.

Other tax cuts recommended in Pawlenty’s budget include targeted income tax relief for veterans, educators, college students and those without access to employer-provided health insurance; as well as targeted business tax exemptions designed to increase job growth in the state.

Health and human services

Noting that the state’s health and human services spending is set to increase by more than \$1 billion this biennium “on autopilot,” Pawlenty urged lawmakers to “get some reasonable control” over that portion of the budget.

“The appetite and growth in this area is going to have severe implications for the state 10 or 15 years out if we don’t get some better control over it,” Pawlenty said.

Nevertheless, the governor’s recommendations include a number of new initiatives, encompassing such diverse issues as health care access, flu pandemic preparedness, mental health and the implementation of electronic medical record systems.

One of the governor’s key recommendations — a proposal to modernize and expand MinnesotaCare and extend health coverage to 13,000 additional children in the state — is already drawing criticism from House Democrats. [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#)

This article highlights only a few key items of Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2008-09. A full summary, as well as a press release and PowerPoint presentation, can be found on the Minnesota Department of Finance Web site at <http://www.finance.state.mn.us>. Streaming video of the governor’s press conference and the responses by DFL legislative leaders and Republican Senate leaders can be found through the Minnesota Senate Web site at <http://www.senate.mn>.

Budget continued on page 22

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Jan. 18-25 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

BUDGET

Alternative budgeting

Minnesotans are willing to pay about \$16.50 for every \$100 in their pocket for state and local government spending. This amount has not varied much over time.

"Call it a citizen's fiscal thermostat on the price of government," Peter Hutchinson, former finance commissioner and gubernatorial candidate, told the House Ways and Means Committee on Jan. 22. If the price of government goes too far above that mark, people start demanding cuts, he said. If it goes too low, Minnesotans look for more government spending.

For example, in 2000 the so-called "set point" was \$17, and "we were actively looking for ways to reduce the price of government," he said. Then the "set point" dropped to \$15.40, before rising to \$16.50 in 2006 due to increased fees, tuition and property taxes. Hutchinson said that Minnesota might be the only state to track the price of government from the perspective of "set point." A report is available at: www.budget.state.mn.us/budget/summary/pog/070109_pog.pdf.

Hutchinson challenged legislators to view budgeting by taking into consideration the "set point," and all taxpayer revenue the state receives, including federal money, before defining how best to leverage the funds to produce better results.

He said the current budgeting challenge is the reality that the rising cost of health care to government affects its ability to increase funding on other priorities. His research shows that while the price of government has stayed stable, the cost of health care has tripled.

The projected \$2.2 billion surplus puts lawmakers in a unique position to make policy decisions that could have a long-term effect on the state, Hutchinson said.

He reminded legislators that the surplus is one-time money, and should be used to create an asset that will deliver over time, he said. His suggestions include paying down outstanding highway debt, changing our health care system so it costs less later and

creating endowments for scholarships to help bring down the cost of higher education.

BUSINESS

Small pharm, big issues

Laws and regulations aimed at corralling big pharmaceutical companies could hurt smaller ones, representatives of a local biopharmaceutical company told a House committee.

Ray Frost, director of government relations for MGI Pharma, a Minnesota-based biopharmaceutical business, said that because of negative perceptions of the pharmaceutical industry as a whole, recent state and federal legislation has hurt smaller pharmaceutical companies that tend to focus on treatments for less common, less profitable diseases.

"Republicans and Democrats — it's not a partisan issue — have come across many policy initiatives in recent years ... many of which have been hurtful or have had adverse effects more to the smaller companies," Frost told members of the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee, which took no action.

Testifying Jan. 23, Frost mentioned additional regulations on clinical trials, legislation restricting sales and marketing techniques. He proposed anti-DTC (direct-

Committees take to the road

The House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for setting spending targets in the House, is scheduled to hold a meeting in Isanti, Jan. 29, at 7:30 p.m. at Spectacular Celebrations, 1001 County Road 5 NE.

A joint meeting of the House E-12 Education Committee and the K-12 Division of the House Finance Committee is scheduled for 7 p.m., Jan. 30, at the Glover-Suddeth Center, 2100 Plymouth Ave. N., Minneapolis.

to-consumer) drug advertising legislation as three examples of policy initiatives that are hurtful to small pharmaceutical companies.

David Melin, MGI Pharma's senior director for corporate and government affairs, said small pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical companies face inherent challenges in terms of achieving profitability. MGI Pharma started in 1979 as a "spin off" of research begun at the University of Minnesota, is only now "on the cusp" of becoming a profitable company after 27 years of research and development, he said.

According to Melin, the company has successfully developed and marketed a number of drugs that treat conditions peripheral to cancer, but it has not yet become profitable because its products are oriented towards small groups of patients.

"The drugs that we're developing — many

SPREADING THE WORD

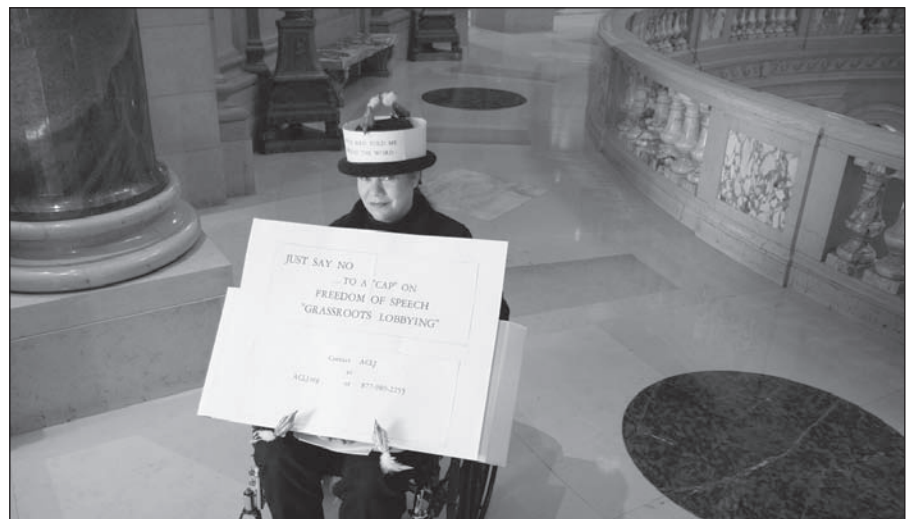


PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Susan Noll of St. Paul works independently in the Capitol Rotunda to "spread the word" locally about two bills that are currently before Congress. The bills, designed to expand lobbying regulation, would affect groups and individuals that encourage the public involvement by classifying them as "grassroots lobbying firms." The new classification would require individuals to register as lobbyists, and they would be subject to penalties for not complying with requirements.

of them are orphan drugs, smaller disease states — but they have an impact on patient lives, and that's really what our focus is," Melin said.

Among the laws that Frost said hinder his business: a recently enacted Minnesota statute that forbids drug companies from spending more than \$49.99 per year to pay for meals or other accommodations for a given doctor, nurse or other health care practitioner.

CRIME

Preparing for release

Statistics show that most crimes are committed by people who have previously spent time in jail.

The best safeguard against this is a re-entry and supervised release system, said [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

At a Jan. 23 hearing, Gary Johnson, director of re-entry services for the [Department of Corrections](#), said that efforts to prepare prisoners for re-entry into the outside world begin as soon as they arrive at the state facilities. Along with orientation, several services are provided, including helping obtain personal identification, resolving outstanding warrants and handling child support issues.

This "continuum of support" may even continue once they have left correctional supervision, he said.

Timothy Lanz, re-entry program manager, said the department also addresses alcohol and drug abuse, and medical conditions. Ninety percent of those who enter the prison system have alcohol and/or drug abuse problems. That is where the problem lies.

"The reality is we have finite resources within the department. We try to prioritize treatment and deliver it to as many as we can," Lanz said.

"I find it ironic that the government has treated these addictions as criminal justice issues. Yet when we get these people in the criminal justice system, we start to define the addiction as more of a health issue," said [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover).

Working together with [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the Public Safety Division of the House Finance Committee, Mullery said he is committed to finding solutions. The committee took no action.

Craig Vos, program manager for Hennepin County Community Corrections, said that on a given day, the county provides services to more than 40,000 clients, 85 percent of which are adults. Because of the size of county, they

also have several specialized units, including domestic assault, sex offender and juvenile supervision.

Sentence fits the crime

An underlying goal to an offender's sentence is to ensure that no Minnesotan will again be victimized by the felon.

"All sentencing in Minnesota is supposed to protect public safety," Isabel Gomez told the Public Safety Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23. The committee took no action.

Gomez, executive director of the Minnesota [Sentencing Guidelines Commission](#), said that since 1980 the commission has maintained a database that keeps track of every element of every felony conviction in the state. This bank of information allows courts to determine an appropriate sentence for an offender based on two factors: the offender's criminal background and the seriousness of the crime.

In addition to being a "gold mine" of material, Gomez said that governments throughout the world want to examine and learn how they can implement a similar system. Additionally, she said the system and the data are invaluable tools for Minnesota to analyze how to spend its resources.

[Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) pointed out that state funding has decreased for county jails, where many short-term felons are housed, while the cost of running the jails continues to rise. "I think it's a wonderful program that relieves the state of a burden," Haws said. "I just think that the state ought to pay better than \$9 on a \$60 bill. Or at least say 'Thank you.'"

[Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) spoke about the continuing need for adequate funding for public safety projects.

He said that members, while thinking about comprehensive health care coverage, don't show much concern about the cost. However, when it comes to prisons, where there are also health care concerns, cost becomes a factor.

EDUCATION

More math needed

American children are falling behind their counterparts around the world — not in a foot race, but in a race for math and science proficiency.

Science, math and technology were the focus of a presentation before the Jan. 18 House E-12 Education Committee.

The committee took no action, but members

said it was good background information.

"By 2010, 90 percent of engineers and scientists in the world will be living in Asia," said Bill Linder, executive director of the ADC Foundation

Asian countries are closing the technology gap and children there have a different focus than American children. "In China, Bill Gates is Britney Spears; in America, Britney Spears is Britney Spears," he said.

A student's high school education in the areas of science, math and technology engineering is more predictive of success than family income or race, he said, adding that the strongest predictor of college completion is the highest level of math completed in high school.

Nancy Nutting, executive director of SciMathMN added that completing math beyond advanced algebra more than doubles the chance that a student entering college will complete a degree. SciMathMN is a non-profit organization that collaborates with K-12 education, higher education and business partners.

She also said that a Michigan State University study found that 51 percent of eighth-graders could not solve a normal fraction problem.

Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan), a retired math teacher, said that his students had to grab a calculator to figure out how much 16×12 is.

"I've been toying with the idea of writing legislation of banning calculators in the



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Arthur Reynolds, a professor at the University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development, and Darlyne Bailey, dean of the university's College of Education and Human Development, testify at the Jan. 18 meeting of the Early Childhood Learning Division of the House Finance Committee.

classroom until the sixth grade,” he said, while acknowledging that it probably would never pass.

“Calculators should be a tool, not a substitute for learning, I hope you don’t write that legislation,” Nutting said.

Minnesota’s Promise

More than two dozen past and present superintendents from around the state want to take Minnesota education from being one of the best in the nation to being one of the best in the world.

“[Minnesota’s Promise](#),” the product of their combined efforts, lays out the plan to improve the state’s education. “The U.S. has an achievement gap compared with the rest of the world among the developed nations,” Kathy Leedom, Willmar Public Schools superintendent, told the [House E-12 Education Committee](#) Jan. 23. “U.S. 15 year olds ranked 24th out of 29 (countries) in math, 24th out of 29 in problem-solving and 15th out of 29 in reading.”

Shortages in numbers of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and clinical laboratory scientists are a chronic problem in Minnesota, and high-tech industry demands for new workers will not be met at our current pace, she said. With “Minnesota’s Promise” rigorous standards, these gaps in employment would be closed.

To ensure the world-class system, the plan proposes rigorous education that will lead to higher education, investing in pre-kindergarten, supporting educators, data and research

that improves teaching and learning, proper funding for schools and mandates, services for special education students, and making global citizenship a core academic subject.

Extending the length of the school year is also part of the plan.

“We live in an information age with school based on an agrarian calendar. Minnesota’s average number of school days is 172; China’s is 230,” Leedom said.

According to the report, “Minnesota is the only state with neither a minimum number of days nor a minimum number of instructional hours.” It also indicates the majority of other U.S. states require 180 days for students.

A 45-15 calendar would be implemented with 45 days of school followed by 15 days of vacation. Proponents say that long summer vacations translate into lost information and teachers must review material from the year before at the beginning of the next school year.

ELECTIONS

Transfer of monies

The [Office of the Secretary of State](#) would be able to reallocate federal [Help America Vote Act](#) (HAVA) appropriations, under a bill approved Jan. 24 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-

Finlayson), [HF160](#) would allow unused appropriations designated for specific HAVA purposes to be transferred to other HAVA purposes. Previous allocation amounts are defined in statute for detailed purposes, said Hilty.

For example, \$120,000 that was designated to process election complaints received by the office that went unused could be transferred for the purpose of maintaining the Statewide Voter Registration System and to develop the capacity to handle registration and election transactions at the polling place.

The \$1.1 million allocated for maintaining the system has been used entirely, and implementing the bill would allow funds to be placed in needed areas, said Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the office. The funds are to be used by the end of June this year, she added.

There was no opposition to the bill, which now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A Senate companion, [SF103](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Contamination concerns

A recent water contamination scare dominated discussion during the Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23, four days after a [Department of Health](#) press release reported that low levels of a toxin had been detected in city wells in several communities south and east of St. Paul.

John Stine, director of the department’s Environmental Health Division, who is mediating the issue, told committee members that there were “no acute health risks” related to the toxin, known as perfluorobutanoic acid, or PFBA. Representatives were not assuaged, however, and challenged Stine about the department’s assessment of the situation and recommendations to the public.

“For the Department of Health to come and say, ‘Well, you know, residents, if you caught this press release and you saw it on the news, you may want to take steps to drink bottled water’ ... Do you understand my frustration?” said [Sen. Katie Sieben](#) (DFL-Newport), who worried how the chemicals may affect young children and pregnant women.

The release did not strongly advise anyone to limit their intake of public water.

PFBA is a cousin of two compounds — PFOA and PFOS — previously found in water sources in Oakdale and Lake Elmo. PFOA and PFOS, which have been found to affect liver



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Roger Giroux, second from right, superintendent of the Anoka-Hennepin School District, presents a portion of the “Minnesota’s Promise” education report to the House E-12 Education Committee Jan. 23. Other testifiers included, from left, Charlie Kyte executive director of Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Kathy Leedom, Willmar Public Schools superintendent, and Kent Pekel, executive director of the Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success.

and thyroid functions in laboratory rats, are more toxic and reside in the body longer than PFBA, according to Stine, although he said too little information is known to say definitely how PFBA affects humans.

According to the press release, the toxins are believed to derive from waste dumped by the 3M Company, which manufactures a number of popular cleaning and office supply products. Several disposal sites and a chemical plant are located throughout the contaminated area.

Committee members also complained about the department's reliance on 3M for testing information on PFBA toxicity, and its reputed poor communication with several affected communities.

"All that you mentioned was 3M-based research and effort on that," said [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo). "Obviously, while we have a lot of admiration for 3M's efforts, given they are the source as well for these pollutants, I would think we would have to have third parties doing this biomedical research going forward."

Minnesota Forest Legacy easement

In an effort to stop the fragmentation of forest land, the [Department of Natural Resources](#) has the opportunity to buy the development rights of 51,000 acres.

The estimated cost of the land, located in and adjacent to the George Washington State Forest in northern Itasca County and the Koochiching State Forest in southern Koochiching County, is \$15 million.

DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten and Tom Landwehr, assistant state director of The Nature Conservancy, presented this opportunity to the Capital Investment Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23.

The Minnesota Forest Legacy Partnership received \$7 million in bonding receipts from the Legislature last year, but Holsten said the proposal he presented then has significantly changed.

"We aren't looking for any money this year or any new language," he said.

Not anticipating the 51,000 acres to come up when they did, Holsten said the department anticipated using the bonding dollars for several projects over the next two years. Instead, the money will be used to purchase the 51,000 acres.

According to its Web site, the partnership "has established a three-year, \$26 million goal to conserve these forests ... around Itasca County, one of the areas hardest hit by changes in the forest products industry." Once purchased, the lands are to be transferred to the DNR.

GRAVE PROTECTION



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Jim Jones, cultural director of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, explains the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to the Minnesota Heritage Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 22. Annamarie Hill, executive director of the council, is seated next to Jones.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and Forest Capital Partners, a real estate company, signed the agreement. Once completed, the agreement — called a conservation easement — will prevent development, provide public access and ensure continued sustainable forest management to provide raw materials, natural resource protection and jobs for the area's resource-based economy.

In addition to the state bonding money, Holsten said the partnership secured another \$12 million — \$6 million from The Blandin Foundation and a \$6 million match from private foundations. He anticipated \$2 million from the Federal Forest Legacy Program, but didn't receive the money because the partnership couldn't guarantee there would be no mining on the land. The state is constitutionally obligated to manage the mineral rights for land in the School Trust Fund.

"We are evaluating other opportunities that are available," Holsten said. "We can make the \$15 million target. We just wanted to tell you it's not quite the deal we told you it was going to be."

Relief for timber industry

A bill approved by a House division aims to bring some much-needed relief to Minnesota's troubled timber industry.

[HF299](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), would allow for the renegotiation of timber contracts by the [Department of Natural Resources](#) — a move Dill said would help stem a recent tide of layoffs and economic stagnation in the industry.

"The bill before you today is in response to the precipitous decline in the timber market," Dill told members of the division, which he chairs.

Dill explained that plummeting timber prices have caused companies that have logging contracts with the DNR to halt logging operations in hopes of a future upturn in the market. That, in turn, has caused hundreds of layoffs and "spin-off layoffs" in peripheral industries, as well as decreasing revenues to the state and to local governments, which depend on income provided by the logging contracts.

In essence, the bill would grant Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Executive Council permission to instruct the DNR to renegotiate the contracts, which were made at a time when timber prices

were at an all-time high, to reflect the current timber prices. Dill said this would provide a “safety net” so that if a similar crisis happens in the future, the industry would not have to wait for the Legislature to convene to receive help.

“If we do give the executive council the authority to do this in the future, should this come up in the [legislative] interim, as it did this time, we can react to it a little more readily,” Dill said.

A few committee members expressed reservations about granting the governor’s council powers that traditionally belong to the Legislature.

“This bill goes much too far,” said [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar), who added that he is very supportive of the state’s loggers.

The bill was approved by the Game, Fish and Forestry Division of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. The bill now goes to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

Intersex fish

A new kind of water pollution that causes fish to acquire both male and female sexual characteristics is prevalent in Minnesota’s rivers and streams, an expert told a House division.

Heiko Schoenfuss, director of St. Cloud State University’s Aquatic Toxicology Laboratory, said that endocrine disrupters, also known as “emerging contaminants,” negatively impact the health of fish by disrupting their estrogen levels, causing male fish to exhibit “intersex” — a combination of male and female reproductive traits.

Schoenfuss, who added that intersex fish have not been reported as widely in Minnesota as in other U.S. states, Europe and Asia, presented his testimony Jan. 23 to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee, which took no immediate action.

“Intersex is a condition that has really raised some eyebrows, and we’re finding it more and more,” Schoenfuss said. “What you see is truly an intersex structure, where you have both male sperm and female eggs in the same structure. Obviously, that’s something that we don’t necessarily consider advantageous.”

The culprits, chemical pollutants that derive from such everyday items as pharmaceuticals, antimicrobial soaps, pesticides, fragrances and perfluorochemicals, have been found in a number of “hot spots” in places like Bemidji, Grand Rapids and St. Cloud, Schoenfuss explained.

Schoenfuss said many of the pollutants most



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Heiko Schoenfuss, associate professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at St. Cloud State University, presents testimony Jan. 23 to the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the House Finance Committee on endocrine disrupters and their effect on the Mississippi River.

likely enter the ecosystem via water treatment plants, which typically are not equipped to eliminate the chemical compounds in question, and which pump treated water back into the environment.

He said that because research on the phenomenon is difficult and still in its early stages, the human health risks are not completely known, but some of the pollutants involved have previously been linked to everything from low sperm density in men to developmental retardation and cancer.

To help stop proliferation of emerging contaminants, Schoenfuss emphasized actively promoting research, fostering communication between researchers and agencies, and educating the public on the proper disposal of pharmaceuticals and other household items.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairwoman of the division, called Schoenfuss’s testimony “very sobering.”

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

HEALTH

Mental health issues to the forefront

Called a “history-making committee” by one of its members, the Mental Health Division of the House Health and Human Services Committee convened for the first time Jan. 19.

“I’m happy that the speaker has made mental health a division,” said [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls), the division’s chairwoman.

She promised a broad look at mental health issues, and will likely hold hearings on how mental health specifically affects housing and employment; suicide and mental health illnesses and treatment; mental health system weaknesses and case management work; and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and victims of torture.

“I think mental health is an issue almost everyone can relate to because, in one way or another, it impacts our immediate families or our extended families ... and we have to start meeting it at the forefront,” [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) said.

Walker said she expects two “mega-bills” relating to mental health issues to be heard during this session, one from [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville) and the other from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Prevention incentives

A bill to limit health savings account tax incentives to people whose high-deductible insurance plan includes preventative care was approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Jan. 23, and awaits action on the House floor. It has no companion in the Senate.

Sponsored by [Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF111](#) is intended to “save lives, while still controlling health care costs.”

Health saving accounts currently enjoy a tax-free status with few restrictions, meaning money invested and interest incurred are not subject to state or federal taxes, and anyone younger than 65 years old cannot be penalized for pulling funds as long as their use is health-related.

Loeffler’s bill would impose a condition that an individual must purchase preventative care coverage, which could include screening for cancer, heart and vascular disease, infectious diseases and mental health and substance abuse, with their health insurance to be eligible for a tax-free health savings account.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) proposed an amendment to strike a clause from the bill. The change, which didn’t pass, absolved those purchasing high-deductible insurance plans



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

As Rep. Diane Loeffler, the bill's sponsor, listens, John Tyler, president of Health Savings Account Inc., testifies Jan 23 before the House Health and Human Services Committee in opposition to a bill that would promote preventive health care by requiring high-deductible health plans used with a health savings account to cover preventive care with no deductible, as permitted by federal law.

from including preventative care coverage without paying deductibles, co-payments or cost-sharing measures.

Loeffler argued removing that language would have rendered the bill meaningless. Emmer argued leaving it as written made the legislation "a mandate, and mandates typically limit options."

John Tyler, a licensed insurance agent and president of Health Savings Account Inc., said that the addition of preventive care coverage could increase premiums.

"There is a segment of the marketplace that is extremely premium sensitive," he said. "The reason they don't purchase (preventative care), is because they are on the fence about whether they can afford the premium, period."

Work rules change

Chuck Johnson, director of Children and Family Services in the [Department of Human Services](#), told the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 24 that new federal mandates for [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#) (MFIP) clients' work obligations are forcing the agency to revamp its program support.

"We really don't know where we're starting from because the regulations are new, and we only have our history to work from," Johnson said.

In other words, the proposal, which will be introduced as legislation later this session, is

not guaranteed to work.

The federal government has required that 50 percent of people receiving federal welfare dollars through the state are to be employed. However, Congress, in an effort to reduce the deficit, redefined work activities and monitoring systems, therefore making it more difficult for the state to reach the 50 percent rate.

Previously, a state could reduce its obligation by factoring in the difference in the number of people receiving MFIP since 1996. Major welfare reform took place in the mid-1990s, which permitted Minnesota to deduct a heavy percentage. Congress reset the year to 2005, making it more difficult for states to meet the threshold. It also narrowed the definition of "work activities."

Johnson covered six proposals that expand how work is defined statewide, re-navigates federal funds to a portion of the state's approximately 40,000 MFIP recipients or impose tougher sanctions on those who do not meet work requirements. The agency proposes to add two employees to handle the new monitoring process, as well.

[Rep. Diane Loeffler](#) (DFL-Mpls) worries that additional responsibilities may also burden county staff, who currently administrate most MFIP services.

The agency expects the cost to total about \$1.4 million in 2008, when the policies would be implemented.

If states do not meet federal requirements,

they are penalized through funding. Penalties could cost the program \$13 million a year, and could increase if the state does not meet the work participation rate.

HOUSING

Information not for sale

Homebuyers would have assurance that their mortgage information would not be sold to third parties, under a bill approved Jan. 23 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove), [HF211](#) would prohibit the sale of information obtained from credit reporting agencies and mortgage lenders to a third party. The change would not apply to information provided by the mortgage originator or servicer to a third party when the third party has been retained to perform a service in connection with the origination or the mortgage loan.

Zellers said the issue arose in his own family when he received a letter from another mortgage company detailing his house payments, albeit with a fake account number, and attempting to lure him from his current mortgage provider. Zellers said the only information needed from him to refinance, according to the letter, was his signature.

[Rep. Jim Davnie](#) (DFL-Mpls) raised the issue of receiving junk mail from affiliates of a person's mortgage lender. Consumer reporting agencies or any other business entity would still be able to give information to affiliates, under the legislation.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, now goes to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Study a new municipality

Northeastern Minnesota may get a new municipality.

Approved Jan. 24 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, [HF119](#) proposes the creation of a 15-member committee to study and recommend to the Legislature whether to establish a "South St. Louis Municipality."

The new municipality would be within the area of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, and include an area roughly 500 square miles around Duluth and several surrounding cities and townships, such as Carlton, Cloquet, Hermantown and Proctor.

[Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), the bill's

sponsor, said the new municipality could “eliminate duplication of public services and reduce costs.”

Though committee members understood the bill’s purpose, some questioned whether it is necessary.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) spoke of how local communities have gathered to share resources and reduce redundancies, and how that might be appropriate in this situation.

Echoing this sentiment and stressing that it is a local matter, [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) said, “I think you can do this without legislation.”

Lanning asked Jaros if there are any resolutions or statements from the local communities supporting the bill, because without them, “The state is telling them what to do.”

Jaros said the bill is not intended to force anyone to do anything, but simply asking that the local communities discuss whether the municipality plan is a good idea.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

MILITARY

Veterans issues seen as priority

The nearly 3,000 Minnesota military personnel currently seeing active duty represent more than 580 communities.

When the troops return, likely in August, it will be the greatest contingent of returning veterans, en masse, in the state’s history. Clark Dyrud, commissioner of the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), wants to make sure that each receives the benefits to which she or he is entitled.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget proposal to substantially increase funding for veterans services will help meet these needs, Dyrud told the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 23.

He said that only about 50 percent of veterans apply for the benefits they have coming; therefore, several outreach programs are proposed, along with expanded benefits.

The cornerstone of the governor’s veterans support package is the Minnesota GI Bill for Veterans, which would supplement the federal GI Bill by providing eligible veterans and dependents up to \$1,000 per semester to a total of \$10,000 for up to five years for higher education.

While this package is proposed in the higher education slice of the budget, the department

would support the proposal with more on-campus veterans assistance offices. Figures show that 30 percent of veterans entering college drop out during the first year of school, Dyrud said. To help veterans, especially those who had been in combat, succeed in school, the number of offices would increase from six to 18.

The budget would also fund county veterans service offices.

While all 87 counties provide this service, it was an unfunded state mandate until \$200,000 was budgeted last year. Dyrud proposes \$3.3 million for the upcoming biennium. He said returning veterans largely “trickle in unnoticed,” and his proposal would expand services to help combat veterans reintegrate and make them aware of veteran programs and services.

The expanded programming proposals raised a concern with [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the committee.

“We want to make sure, as we move forward, that the budget not only addresses programming, but staffing needs. We don’t want things to fall through the cracks because there aren’t enough bodies,” he said.

RETIREMENT

Duluth retiree benefits

A bill that attempts to curb the impending \$300 million health care liability for retired Duluth city employees was approved Jan. 24 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF163](#) would allow the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) to establish an irrevocable fund for the city to help pay for post-employment benefits promised to retirees. The Minnesota State Board of Investment would invest money for the fund with earnings credited to the city.

The investment board could do a much better job of investment returns than the city on its own, Huntley said.

The bill, which now goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, comes on the heels of a Jan. 22 report issued by the Office of the Legislative Auditor that expresses serious concerns with post-employment benefits by local jurisdictions that are not adequately funded.

In 1983, the state auditor told Duluth city officials to be more thorough in their accounting practices after learning employees were retiring with large amounts of sick leave time. Negotiations with the unions resulted in free health care for retirees in exchange for giving up the sick leave, Huntley said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

James Grathwol, center, director of government relations for the Minneapolis Public Schools, holds a graph showing the effect of property taxes and school funding for the district. Scott Croonquist, left, executive director of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, and Brad Lundell, right, executive director of Schools for Equity in Education, also testified on education and property tax issues during a Jan. 19 meeting of the Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division of the House Taxes Committee.

[Rep. Neil W. Peterson](#) (R-Bloomington) asked if the move would be create a state fiduciary responsibility through PERA.

PERA Executive Director Mary Most Vanek said the legislation allows the organization to simply be “a record keeper” by establishing rules and procedures for irrevocable accounts. “We don’t view this as us being liable for benefits to be paid out of the Duluth account,” she added.

The bill addresses only the city of Duluth, and not others that are in the same predicament. [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, said the committee will revisit the issue, but should allow the Duluth bill to move forward setting a precedent.

A companion bill, [SF60](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettnner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Spending government aid

Telling cities how to spend their local government aid was just one of many things legislators took issue with during a joint tax committee meeting Jan. 24.

“How do you justify this precedent of telling cities how to spend their LGA?” [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) asked Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess during a gathering of the House Taxes Committee and its Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

A provision in Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s budget proposal states that cities with more than 100,000 — only Minneapolis and St. Paul — residents would have to use increases in LGA funding for public safety.

“It seems clear to me that this is a political poke in the eye by the governor,” Paymar said. “I just think you’re setting a bad precedent here. It’s very transparent here to see what you or he is doing.”

Einess said the idea of dedicating the funds to public safety came from a bill sponsored by [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls) that said LGA should be dedicated to safety in cities with more than 100,000 residents.

“That is totally false,” Mullery said.

He added that in his bill it said a separate pot of money would go to the anti-crime efforts.

“It was never my intention to have LGA be dedicated to anything,” he said. “It was never intended that way and was never stated that way.”

Einess said the language of the bill made it clear that there was a dedicated portion that would go to public safety.

“Whether this comes out of the LGA formula or another dedicated source — a dollar is a dollar is a dollar,” he said. “One dollar spent in LGA is equal to \$1 spent in any other dedicated source. If I misquoted you, I apologize.”

[Rep. Ann Lenczewski](#) (DFL-Bloomington), tax committee chairwoman, said there are cities, like Rochester and Bloomington, which are nearing 100,000 in population.

“There are a lot of large cities that don’t want to dedicate this money for certain things,” she said. “We need to think about who we’re talking about 5 and 10 years out.”

Einess said the governor has been hearing crime has been a problem because of the LGA cuts that have occurred over the last couple of years.

“He thought dedicating LGA money to those purposes was warranted,” Einess said.

Employer education break

Employers whose pocketbook helps employees further their education could get a tax break.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF40](#) would provide a state income tax credit for employers who help pay undergraduate tuition and fees for specific employees.

Approved Jan. 18 by the [Higher Education Work Force Development Policy and Division of the House Finance Committee](#), the bill next goes to the committee’s [Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division](#).

“We all have an interest in improving the educational attainment of all Minnesotans, including older folks and people who are not traditional students, people who went to work right after high school and want to pursue a higher education later,” Thissen said. “Employers have an interest in that because it makes employees more productive, and employees have an obvious interest in improving their wages and educational attainment. But as a state, we do too because the more productive our folks are, the better off all of us are.”

To qualify for the credit, the employee would need to work at least 30 hours per week and earn less than \$20 per hour.

The credit against state individual or corporate income taxes would maximize at 30 percent of the permissible costs, to a maximum of \$2,000 per employee per year.

The original hourly pay rate would have been less than \$12, but the amount was successfully amended upward by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park). “At our company, the people that are making \$20 an hour aren’t exactly living high on the hog, and would really benefit from this,” she said.

“If he does \$16 (an hour) we qualify,” noted [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), division chairman. Legislators are paid \$31,140 annually.

“It’s presumptive to think that we’d qualify; first we’d have to get accepted into college,” joked [Rep. Joe Atkins](#) (DFL-Inver Grove Heights).

No fiscal note was provided, but Rukavina indicated a similar bill last year would have cost about \$5 million at the \$12 hourly rate.

A companion bill, [SF153](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the [Higher Education Budget and Policy Division](#) of the [Senate Finance Committee](#).

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Heritage celebration

[Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) was sporting a green, white and red button during the Jan. 18 meeting of the Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Division of the House Finance Committee.

“Nice button, Rep. Hortman,” said [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman.

“I thought it was [kiss] up to the chair day,” Hortman responded.

“Members, notice our Italian flag there,” said Rukavina. “[House Majority Leader Tony] Sertich, [Sen. David] Tomassoni and I are all of Italian heritage.” He explained that years ago Tomassoni had the buttons made up. “It was one good idea that Sen. Tomassoni has had. Those were our buttons, and they became collector’s items.”

“I think he was also the one who told me, ‘Stick with the rangers and you’re never in danger,’” responded Hortman. “For new members, you might want to adopt that as your motto.”

During that same meeting, talk turned to landlords who don’t properly maintain living quarters they rent to students.

“I know that Rep. (Al) Juhnke and I were without heat in our apartment, and it was tempting not to have to snuggle up just to keep warm,” Rukavina said. “We complained for a week straight. I threatened to bring firewood down from the Range and burn it on the living room floor. They finally got it fixed.”

Some Greater Minnesota legislators share an apartment when they are in St. Paul during the week.

Back to basics

With his duties as speaker of the House behind him, [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) has found time to go back to his classroom roots. Every Tuesday night you can find him tutoring inner-city St. Paul students.

“I have to tell you, there is simply nothing more rewarding than helping others succeed. As a former teacher, it is fun to get back to my classroom roots, and I truly enjoy watching and helping these students learn. Who knows, someday one of these kids may become speaker of the House,” he writes in his e-mail newsletter.

State pension plans

Will there be enough in the coffers?

By PATTY OSTBERG

Thousands of retired public employees may be sitting on the edge of their seats as legislators formulate solutions to recover the state's public employees pension plans that currently have deficits. Between actuarial formulas and decreased market values, the current prospects for plans are concerning.

A \$4 billion deficit looms over the Public Employees Retirement Plan; \$1.6 billion shortfall for the Teachers Retirement Association plan; and \$332 million insufficiency in the Minnesota State Retirement System.

According to a [report](#) released Jan. 22 by the [Office of the Legislative Auditor](#), unless benefit formulas change to reflect the increase and decrease of the market value of plans, among other solutions, there won't be enough in state coffers in future years to meet pension needs.

The problem

The actuarial calculations for state pension plans, determined by the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, uses a funding ratio of assets being equal to liabilities without factoring the ups and downs of the market. Therefore pension plans appear 6 percent to 10 percent better funded than they actually are, according to the report.

There is a logic behind the decision to calculate this way, Legislative Auditor James Nobles told the [House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee](#) Jan. 23.

Currently, when a person retires, enough assets are removed from the active fund and put into the post-retirement fund to support the person's annuity. By this calculation, at some point in time, this person could say they are fully funded. But market influences go up and down, and in the past, retiree benefits increased as the market gained, but when the market decreased the high benefit percentages stayed the same. The result: when the assets go down a deficit incurs.

At odds are employee cohorts because

depending on the year in which you retired, benefits were wide-ranging. For example, those who retired before July 1, 2001, received on average a 9.2 percent annual increase from 1996 to 2001. Those after 2001 received increases of 2.5 percent or less.

Therefore, the post-retirement fund did not retain enough money in good years to offset the lean years, said Jody Hauer, program evaluator principal with the auditor's office.

Past changes

Since the post-retirement fund was created, there have been three formula changes, said

Greg Bergstrom, executive director of the state retirement system.

In the 1970s, a change didn't yield a single increase in benefit. An increase was attempted in the 1980s by moving everything into bonds as a long-term investment, but that didn't work either. The current mechanism was put in place without knowing of an impending large increase followed by a sharp decline in the market from 1998 to 2003, causing the formula to fail. Had the market continued to have mild ups and downs, the current formula would have worked, he said.

In 1998 funding ratios for the plans were at 134 percent. The following year the planning boards were sitting on a large pot of money and suggested to several groups to spread the increases over several years. "We made a very big mistake, we did not do our legwork selling it to the various groups," and other changes occurred instead, Bergstrom said.

In 2005, the Legislature made several changes, although none will offer a remedy for the post-retirement fund deficit, Hauer said.

Last year a 5 percent cap was placed on retirees' benefits and will go into effect in 2010 and will help avoid future deficits, Hauer said. Additionally contribution increases were made, but those will only help active employees in the basic funds and not the retirees with money coming from the post-retirement fund, she noted.

Solutions

The state planning boards are examining the suggestions made by the state auditor for future changes as well as developing some of their own, said Bergstrom.

One option the boards are considering is to combine the active fund with the post-retirement fund, and then change the formula mechanism, he said. Another is to set up contingency funding or make no changes and rely on investment returns to eliminate the deficit in a reasonable time period.

Hauer said that as the Legislature addresses the deficit it should also change the benefit formula by replacing the investment component with an enhanced inflation component instead.

For example, retirees would be giving up the investment-based increase part of the formula,



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Legislative Auditor James Nobles and Jody Hauer, program evaluator with the legislative auditor's office, discuss pensions for volunteer firefighters and post-employee benefits for public employees during the Jan. 23 meeting of the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Pensions continued on page 22

Click it or get a ticket

Bill calls for mandatory seat belt usage

By Mike Cook

Dr. Merle Hillman remembers the day clearly.

Hillman, an emergency physician and president-elect of the state chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, recalls responding to a traffic incident one Sunday morning.

A car containing a family of four crossed the median on Highway 212 and struck another vehicle. The 32-year-old father was declared dead at the scene, and the 35-year-old mother was ejected from the car.

"Despite all of our efforts, I remember declaring her dead and having to tell her children, ages 6 and 8, that their mom and dad had died in this horrible traffic accident," he said. "That vision remains with me to this day."

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls) does not want any family to have to experience a motor vehicle fatality because of failure to buckle up. He is sponsoring [HF106](#) to improve Minnesota's rate of buckled-up passengers.

The bill would make failure to wear a seat belt a primary offense, meaning a violator could be stopped solely for this purpose. Under current law, a citation can be issued only if a motorist is stopped for another offense.

It also requires that everyone in a passenger or commercial vehicle be buckled up. Present law requires seat belt use for any front-seat passenger and "a passenger riding in any seat of a passenger vehicle who is older than 3 but younger than 11 years of age."

Approved nearly unanimously by the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee of the [Transportation Division](#) of the [House Finance Committee](#) Jan. 24, the bill now goes to the committee's [Public Safety Finance Division](#).

"We can take a concrete step toward saving lives — 40 lives a year is the estimate — and avoiding 400 serious injuries," said Thissen, who noted that 71 percent of Minnesotans support mandatory seat belt usage. It is estimated that primary seat belt laws in 25



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Loni Kjos of Alexandria shares the story of losing her daughter in a car crash with the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee of the Transportation Division of the House Finance Committee Jan. 24. She supports a bill that would make seat belt violations a primary offense.

other states have increased usage by 11 percent and decreased traffic fatalities by 10 percent.

Plus, this would help rein in health care costs.

"The health costs for an unbelted driver in a crash are 50 percent higher than the medical costs for a belted driver," Thissen said. "Those are dollars we could otherwise spend reducing people's premiums or expanding access to health care or doing any number of other things. The estimates are that we'll save \$85

million to our state government over the next eight years."

Public Safety Commissioner Michael Campion said it is his understanding that the governor, who supported similar legislation in the past as a House member, would sign this bill if it reaches his desk. "This legislation, with its outcomes, doesn't cost anything," he said.

But it could earn the state \$15 million in federal funds, which would in part be used for roadway safety improvements.

Katherine Burke Moore, deputy director of the [Office of Traffic Safety](#) in the [Department of Public Safety](#), said 83 percent of Minnesotans wear their seat belt. However, she noted that 60 percent of people who died in Minnesota crashes last year were from the 17 percent of those unbuckled.

Dying in a vehicle crash is unexpected and violent, she said. "We don't accept homicides as something that is acceptable, yet we have four times as many traffic fatalities. We want that number to go down. ... The ultimate price is a family who loses someone in a crash."

Loni Kjos of Alexandria knows that all too well. Her 17-year-old daughter, Kelsey, was killed in a crash on Nov. 8, 2004.

"School was out at 2:30 and she caught a ride home with a girlfriend," she said. "The driver lost control of the car and it rolled. The driver was belted, and she had only a simple hand injury. Our Kelsey was not wearing her seat belt and was thrown from the vehicle." She died en route to the hospital.

The incident left her parents wondering why she wasn't belted in, because she always wore her seat belt when driving and always wore it when riding with her mother. "Did she unfasten it to reach for something or did she just plain forget? We will never know," Kjos said. "Just that one click would have made all the difference in the world to everyone who loved her."

Conversely, her son, Grant, was wearing a seat belt when he was involved in a crash seven years ago. Although he sustained a brain injury, he has made a full recovery.

"Every community has their own Kelsey story," she said. "It's time to make a difference. It's time to stop the loss."

Seat belts continued on page 22

Wanting coverage for all

Bunn makes health care reform her top priority

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Between Election Day and the first day of session, [Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) was able to take a vacation that included relaxing



Rep. Julie Bunn

on a beach with a good book.

Opting against a light, easy read, she paged through "Transforming Public Policy," a book about the strategic use of policy entrepreneurship and innovation in developing public policy. "It was the most exciting book I have recently read. It was so good."

Bunn, who spent four years on the Lake Elmo Planning Commission, said that health care coverage and cost were the most important issues that came up while talking to constituents when she went door-to-door through her district. Among her committee

assignments are the House Health and Human Services Committee and the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee.

"Even though Washington County is one of the wealthiest counties in the state, there are still gaps in [medical] coverage," she said. "From layoffs, divorces and 20-somethings going off their parent's health coverage, people are struggling to pay for insurance."

Health care, in her opinion, is equivalent to the Cold War issue of a previous era. "If we don't solve the problem of skyrocketing health care costs, there will not be enough funds for our schools, transportation systems or clean water."

Bunn, who has a Ph.D in economics from Stanford University, is also troubled with how the state has fulfilled its budgetary needs using one-time funds or accounting shifts.

She is also concerned with schools not receiving a stable source of funding, or enough

DISTRICT 56A

2002 population: 36,812

Largest city: Woodbury

County: Washington

Top concerns: Health care costs and education funding

to maintain current educational levels. The governor's budget proposal still comes up short, she said. "Four percent a year may not meet the needs, even though we should try to reform schools."

Bunn believes that middle- and lower-income families should not pay a disproportionate share of taxes, and that a fair state tax policy includes closing foreign operating corporation loopholes and going after tax cheaters that cost the state an estimated \$1 billion annually.

When Bunn is able to grab a moment of free time, she enjoys five-mile outdoor walks and cooking while listening to novels on tape or on her MP3 player.

New but experienced

Gottwalt brings nine years of city council experience

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

[Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) sees being in politics as an extension of giving back to the community.



Rep. Steve Gottwalt

And he's done just that for a decade.

Having served on the St. Cloud City Council for nine years, Gottwalt is now starting his first term at the Capitol. "I'm not one to sit on the sidelines and criticize," he said.

Gottwalt offers a message to the people of the state, "I believe we live in a land of opportunity, not entitlement. I believe government has an important but limited role to play in addressing our needs and wants."

A main issue facing his district is transportation. Gottwalt sees the Northstar

commuter rail line as vital link from his area to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"From St. Cloud to Rochester, it is one of the fastest growing parts of the Midwest, if not the whole country," he said, adding that this link is vital to the long-term growth of St. Cloud.

Gottwalt is serving on two education committees. He plans to introduce a bill forcing mandated programs to be fully funded. "If we're going to have mandated programs, we need to be told up front on how it is going to be paid," he said.

"It's not about dollars, it's about excellence. Teachers need to be accountable for their performance," said Gottwalt, who also believes that parents must also be held accountable for their student's academic achievement or failure.

"Parent involvement is the number-one indicator for success in school," Gottwalt said. "Two generations of parenting skills

DISTRICT 15A

2002 population: 36,702

Largest city: St. Cloud

County: Stearns

Top concerns: Education and business

have been lost, and this is negatively affecting today's youth and their ability to learn." With more and more single parents raising children alone, generations of children are going without fathers who would normally be there to help and raise their young, he said.

Gottwalt wants to see best practices being implemented in schools, instead of more money "being thrown at a problem."

"We should take ideas from around the state and try to implement what works in other schools, he said."

A communications director for a grocery store chain, Gottwalt's other priorities are ensuring that cities and the state live within their means, and seeing marketplace reforms in areas that need it.

Activism in a new place

In St. Paul, Madore to fight for familiar issues

By Mike Cook

Like many parents with school-aged children, [Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) has purchased enough wrapping paper to last for a few years.



Rep. Shelley Madore

"I'd really like to see my families not have to have another fundraiser next year to pay for a teacher," she said. One of her goals this year is to increase special education funding, an issue that is especially important to her family. Her 16-year-old daughter, Erica, has spina bifida and her 13-year-old son, Jason, has autism.

She also hopes to work on ways for businesses to partner with schools for special needs students, such as through mentoring programs.

"A lot of our kids need pre-employment

experience, and maybe working through a mentorship program with the businesses will help them to learn there is a reason to stay in school," she said, noting that for every regular education student that drops out of school, three special education students leave. "These kids are already having a tough enough time without a high school diploma."

Madore started the first Cub Scout pack in the country for boys with autism. Although the pack has since disbanded, she is proud that four boys earned the "Arrow of Light," the highest rank in Cub Scouts.

"I was a Girl Scout leader for seven years, and then I wanted my son to have that experience," she said.

After years as a community activist, including stints with city and school committees, Madore knew it was time to be of assistance on a larger stage. "I just said, 'You know, I can really make an impact at the Legislature given my knowledge base.'"

DISTRICT 37A

2002 population: 36,915

Largest city: Burnsville

County: Dakota

Top concerns: Transportation, property tax relief and education

Madore represents two communities for which transit is a key issue. Cedar Avenue is on the west side of her district; Interstate 35W is on the east. Commuters often face congestion on both roadways.

"We need to look at the cost-effectiveness between (bus rapid transit) and (light-rail transit) to bring down Cedar," said Madore, who serves on the Transportation Division of the House Finance Committee, and is vice chairwoman of the Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee. Additionally, she would also like to see funding available to increase routes for the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, which serves both communities.

Fixing health care

Murphy mixes passions for health care, politics

By Nick Busse

Ask [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) why she ran for office, and you're likely to get a very specific answer: "to fix health care."



Rep. Erin Murphy

To be sure, Murphy has other issues on her agenda: education, the environment, global warming, renewable energy, mass transit and civil rights, to name a few. But for Murphy, a registered nurse and current executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association, health care is her bread and butter.

"When I door-knocked this summer, what I heard from people was that health care was getting so expensive they're worried they're

going to lose their coverage," Murphy said. "That lack of security is really worrisome to people."

Born and raised in a working-class Wisconsin household, Murphy said she inherited her politics from her parents.

"I grew up in a family that talked politics," she said, adding that she worked on her first political campaign while she was in the eighth grade. (Her candidate won a seat in the Wisconsin State Senate.)

But the idea of entering politics didn't occur to her until much later in life, when she saw how great a role public policy played in her chosen profession.

"When I started studying nursing, I was very content with the idea of working in a hospital and for a few years, didn't even think about politics," Murphy said. "But it doesn't take long to see that the reach of a practicing

nurse ... is limited by policy."

She spent several years lobbying on behalf of the nurses association, and when her predecessor, Rep. Matt Entenza, announced he was stepping down to run for attorney general last year, she knew the time was right to run for office.

Murphy said her No. 1 priority is to work toward universal health care coverage for all Minnesotans — a step she believes is necessary to help control the rising cost of health care.

"If we were able, through policymaking, to put more order to it and stretch the dollars so more people could get covered, then I think we would actually have the leverage to be able to ratchet down costs," she said.

DISTRICT 64A

2002 population: 36,752

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Top concern: Health care

Making a move

After 32 years in one role, Olin moves to House

By **CRAIG GREEN**

After [Rep. Dave Olin](#) (DFL-Thief River Falls) graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School, he moved to Thief



Rep. Dave Olin

River Falls to work as an attorney.

When he was elected Pennington County attorney two years later, Olin thought he would hold the position four to eight years, at the most, before building his private practice.

"Lo and behold, I started to enjoy public service," said Olin. "I enjoy doing things for the public. I never got the itch to leave the job." He stayed for the next 32 years.

When Olin finally left his position, he again thought that he would return to his private law practice. But when former Rep. Maxine

Penas decided not to run for re-election, Olin saw this as another opportunity to use his experience to serve his constituents.

"I had been concerned about what had been going on in the public sector and local government aid, and the fact that property taxes have been going up significantly and costing citizens in my district money," said Olin. "I thought that maybe by running for the Legislature, I could [work to] reverse the trend of local property taxes going up."

Education, another central point for Olin, is a common theme in his family. His mother and his sister taught, and one of his daughters is a teacher.

Olin is concerned "that there hasn't been enough emphasis put on things like early education."

Reflecting on his years of experience dealing with youth as a county attorney, Olin believes that there is a need for after-school programs,

DISTRICT 1A

2002 population: 36,485
Largest city: Thief River Falls
Counties: Kittson, Marshall, Pennington, Roseau
Top concerns: Property taxes and education

and programs that give youth positive and nurturing role models.

Olin's district is also home to many parks and forests, and residents who love to ride snowmobiles and ATVs. Olin will not only work to protect the environment, but also to ensure that his constituents are free to fully enjoy their environment, without unnecessary government restrictions, he said.

Continuing his years of service in his new role at the House, Olin said, "I represent all the constituents in my district. Whether they are Republican, Democrat, independent, or whatever party they may be, I am their legislator."

Passion for education

Tillberry goes from school board to statehouse

By **MIA SIMPSON**

[Rep. Tom Tillberry](#) (DFL-Fridley) knows the issues he wants to affect, and they all have something to do with young people.



Rep. Tom Tillberry

As a high school counselor, he's seen and helped treat many problems facing youth: drugs, academics, mental illness, homelessness, college and career. He's also been a school board member and a teacher's union organizer.

"I think the times, the way they are right now, I have to get involved," he said. "I'm just asking for fairness. Life is hard enough. Can't we help each other?"

His first stint in public service was 2005, when he was elected as a write-in candidate for the Fridley School Board. For a half-decade prior, he was a negotiator and representative for Education Minnesota in Roseville, the city where he's worked as a school counselor for 11 years.

He decided to run for state office after he was approached by former Rep. Connie Bernardy, who announced last July that she would not seek re-election.

"She asked me if I would do it," he said. "I've always been a supporter of hers. The support that I got from her campaign was wonderful."

He remembers nights during the campaign when dozens of students gathered in his family's basement to stuff literature and prepare other campaign materials. He has deep respect for his young supporters, and a concern for making sure they get the best from their schools.

"I can talk education all over the place," he said.

Tillberry has traveled to several South American countries on medical missions and music tours – he plays trumpet in his church orchestra – and to visit foreign classrooms.

"I've seen students there eager to learn," he said. "A lot of them don't even have a fair opportunity."

DISTRICT 51B

2002 population: 36,686
Largest city: Blaine
Counties: Anoka, Ramsey
Top concerns: Education, health care and property taxes

He simulated the political process for students at Roseville Area High School in an attempt to engage them in politics. In one case, Tillberry showed video of floor debate on a bill, and asked students whether they thought it deserved passage. They didn't.

Tillberry said it's important to make issues and governmental process real for young people, especially as education funding drops.

"Eventually, our pride in our state is falling apart," he said. "I'm seeing it in student apathy."

Tillberry sits on the House Commerce and Labor, E-12 Education and Taxes committees, and the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Division of the House Finance Committee.

Not slowing down

Ward continues his public service in St. Paul

By **MIKE COOK**

As they tearfully drove away from their hometown of Proctor 20 years ago, [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd) was asked by his



Rep. John Ward

wife, Sally, not to get so involved in the teachers' union and never run for office again.

He agreed, but not for long.

"She has always allowed John Ward to be John Ward," he said. "I've always been so actively involved in my community, in my church, but I've never been this busy and this active. But it's really exciting, it's a great opportunity."

A class president in high school, he spent two years on the Proctor City Council and three more as mayor, before a career opportunity necessitated his move to the Central Lakes Area.

Now, as a House member, he serves on the House E-12 Education Committee and two education divisions of the House Finance Committee.

"I taught for 33 years and coached for 25 of those years," he said. "I worked in many different educational areas, everything from an elementary school to a middle school to a junior high to a senior high. I started an alternative education program and directed that, and I even worked in a prison. I also have a broad base of curricula that I taught: phy. ed, driver's ed, health and I coached. For most of my career I was a special ed teacher with learning disabled children and emotional behavior disorder children."

Ward, who retired last May, received many awards during his education and coaching careers, culminating with being named the Wal-Mart State Teacher of the Year in 2006.

Proud of the \$10,000 to his district that came with the award, Ward said the best part

| DISTRICT 12A |
|--|
| 2002 population: 36,813 |
| Largest city: Brainerd |
| County: Crow Wing |
| Top concerns: Education, health care access and equitable property taxes |

was knowing it was students and parents that nominated him.

His work ethic is something that was ingrained early in life.

"Being taught lessons about hard work, caring about people and giving back are all really important lessons," he said. "I did that as a mayor and an educator, now I'm hoping to do that as a state legislator. I'm just a plain, ordinary person that wants to do what's best for everybody."

Other areas he hopes to work on include access to quality health care and property tax reform.

Keepin' it together

Wollschlager brings work ethic to State Capitol

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

The office of [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls) feels like a nature hike through her district. Local artists' works line



Rep. Sandy Wollschlager

the walls with framed sketches, watercolors, and mixed media of local creeks and dams.

The colorful landscapes will "remind me of the people, the things I love," and the land her constituents want her to protect, she said. They will also

remind her of why she ran for office during late night meetings, she added with a laugh.

Wollschlager said she hopes to have the opportunity to use her House committee assignments to foster outdoor funding for habitats, but other issues in her district will be her focus as well.

Property tax increases are a frequent concern voiced by her constituents. As vice chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee, she will have firsthand knowledge of ways to reduce these rates, which she said is her top priority on the committee. When "property taxes go up \$100, it hurts," particularly for the working class, she said.

Observing and collecting those constituent concerns are her responsibility as a legislator, Wollschlager said. "If you're in the working class ... you don't have time for politics."

After graduating from high school, Wollschlager worked as a boxer at a turkey factory. Adding up the turkey-weight per box was not something she saw as a lifelong career.

Instead, Wollschlager, a senior regulatory affairs specialist at 3M, earned a chemistry degree from Augsburg College and a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University, both while raising two children with her husband.

| DISTRICT 28A |
|----------------------------------|
| 2002 population: 36,636 |
| Largest city: Red Wing |
| Counties: Wabasha, Goodhue |
| Top concern: Property tax reform |

At Harvard, she met several former Minnesota legislators who told her, "business is easy for you, we need people to do public service," she said. A run for the local school board upon her return set her on course to the Legislature.

She is proud of being able to keep her family intact while driving forward in her career. "Sometimes it's not about outright brilliance, it's about keeping it all together," she said.

Wollschlager also serves on the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, and the Veterans Affairs Division of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Monday, January 22

HF228-Paymar (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent School District No. 625, St. Paul, prior uncovered service purchase authorized relating to retirement.

HF229-Howes (R)

Finance

Accelerated highway construction projects funding provided and money appropriated.

HF230-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Predatory offender registration law expanded to include offenders under the domestic assault by strangulation statute.

HF231-Moe (DFL)

Finance

Greater Minnesota Business Development Investment Fund established and money appropriated.

HF232-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education

School district integration revenue formula modified.

HF233-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education

International Baccalaureate pilot program established across all grades of a school district and money appropriated.

HF234-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education

School district reserve fund requirements and reports eliminated and school district primary elections required only after adoption of a resolution.

HF235-Murphy, E. (DFL)

Finance

Developmental screening aid funding increased.

HF236-Greiling (DFL)

E-12 Education

School districts authorized to delay the implementation of special education tuition billing for an additional two years.

HF237-Morgan (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Pre-election reports required of certain contributions to political committees, funds and party units; reporting requirements modified; and contribution limits increased for secretary of state and state auditor candidates.

HF238-Jaros (DFL)

E-12 Education

Legislative Commission on High School Reform established.

HF239-Lesch (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Sexual assault counselor testimonial confidentiality provided, mistake of age defense eliminated for certain sexual assault offenders and penalties enhanced for non-consensual sexual offenses committed by massage or bodywork professionals.

HF240-Lesch (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Sheriff, deputy sheriff and coroner prohibition on practicing law repealed.

HF241-Erickson (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

English designated as the official state language.

HF242-Eken (DFL)

Taxes

Mahnomen County tax jurisdiction temporary aid payments made permanent.

HF243-Walker (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Ombudsman for corrections reestablished and money appropriated.

HF244-Ozment (R)

Finance

Clean Water Legacy account General Fund transfer provided.

HF245-Anzelc (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Adult foster care licensing requirements modified.

HF246-Hortman (DFL)

Finance

Metropolitan Council required to study and report on light rail and commuter rail feasibility for the I-394 corridor, and feasibility of combining I-394 and Southwest rail transit corridors, and money appropriated.

HF247-Kranz (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources

Wild animal removal from urban areas provided.

HF248-Solberg (DFL)

Finance

Canisteo Mine Outflow Project funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF249-Kranz (DFL)

Finance

Independent School District No. 16, Spring Lake Park, lease levy requirements exception authorized.

HF250-Peterson, A. (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Ambulance service and inter-hospital transfer provisions modified.

HF251-Brod (R)

Taxes

Tax reform action commission established, appointments provided, report to Legislature required and money appropriated.

HF252-Anzelc (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Part-time peace officer restrictions repealed.

HF253-Buesgens (R)

E-12 Education

Election to detach land for a new school district provided.

HF254-Mahoney (DFL)

Finance

Job training program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF255-Svigggum (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Plant hazards to livestock and consumers evaluation and report required.

HF256-Peppin (R)

Finance

Anoka County; Highway 101 and I-94 interchanges funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF257-Peppin (R)

Health & Human Services

Council on Disability sunset delayed.

HF258-Greiling (DFL)

E-12 Education

Congress memorialized, by resolution, to offer greater flexibility to states and fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act as part of its reauthorization.

HF259-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Grandparent visitation rights provided on behalf of the child, grandparent visitation rights expanded, procedures specified and mediation required.

HF260-Kalin (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Veterans exempted from the requirement of a firearm safety certificate.

HF261-Brod (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Reapportionment procedures established.

HF262-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF263-Paulsen (R)

Taxes

Education credit income tax inflation adjustment provided.

HF264-Ruth (R)

Finance

Trunk Highway 14 between Dodge Center and Owatonna reconstruction funding provided and money appropriated.

HF265-Severson (R)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Minnesota GI Bill program for veterans established to provide postsecondary education assistance, eligibility and assistance amount determined and money appropriated.

HF266-Paulsen (R)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Legislature; House and Senate membership reduced.

HF267-Olson (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

Municipal boundary adjustment advisory task force extended.

HF268-Howes (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Driver's license reinstatement fee and surcharge imposed for certain driving offenses, proceeds deposited for state patrol funding and money appropriated.

HF269-Howes (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs

County office appointment and consolidation provided subject to notice, hearing and reverse referendum.

HF270-Howes (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Habitual truant termination of jurisdiction provision removed.

HF271-Haws (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Lawful purpose gambling expenditures modified to include licensed fraternal organizations.

HF272-Haws (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Firearms safety and usage training certificates continuation provided while soldiers and essential employees are engaged in active military service.

HF273-Howes (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Fireworks sale and personal use authorized.

HF274-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Rural Finance Authority agricultural loan funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF275-Brod (R)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare contingent reduction in tax rates provided.

HF276-Otremba (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare self-employed farmers income definition modified.

HF277-Clark (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Window screens in new residential dwellings required to comply with safety standards.

HF278-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Deer license surcharge imposed for deer management and reimbursing the cost of processing deer donated for charitable purposes, and money appropriated.

HF279-Haws (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

War Orphans Act educational benefits eligibility clarified and extended for surviving military spouses and children.

HF280-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Lake County tax-forfeited lands proceeds temporary suspension of apportionment provided.

HF281-Moe (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Local governmental planning assistance provided, regional development commissions required to submit annual work programs and money appropriated.

HF282-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Pharmaceutical products exception provided where competition exists relating to law prohibiting sales below cost.

HF283-Ruth (R)**Taxes**

Cities, counties and townships exempted from sales tax.

HF284-Ruth (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Special assessment deferments authorized for members of the armed forces, and grants from the Support Our Troops account authorized for eligible individuals to pay special assessments.

HF285-Severson (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to state firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF286-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF287-Holberg (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Employers required to give notice of employee rights relating to personnel record review and access.

HF288-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Crime victim support grant funding provided and money appropriated.

HF289-Kalin (DFL)**Minnesota Heritage Finance Division**

State Capitol tour fee charges prohibited.

HF290-Mahoney (DFL)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

University Enterprise Laboratories Inc. funding provided for bioscience business development and money appropriated.

HF291-Dominguez (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans home employees granted commissary privileges when working double shifts.

HF292-Ozment (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Video display devices collection, transportation and recycling provided.

HF293-Tingelstad (R)**Finance**

Environment and Natural Resources funding provided, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources meeting requirements modified and money appropriated.

HF294-Mullery (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Pollution Control Agency structure modified.

HF295-Welti (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

State employee energy savings suggestions incentives provided.

HF296-Solberg (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Special paper products vehicle permit effective date modified.

HF297-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Health care premiums restricted, universal health care plan required, MinnesotaCare provisions modified, residents right to affordable health care stated, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF298-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Family planning access increased to prevent unintended pregnancies, nurses authorized to dispense oral contraceptives at clinics, reimbursement rates increased, grant reductions eliminated and money appropriated.

HF299-Dill (DFL)**Game, Fish & Forestry Division**

Timber permit extension, cancellation and terminations provided.

HF300-Haws (DFL)**Taxes**

Military pay tax deduction expanded and military pension subtraction including survivor benefits created.

HF301-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Blighted housing rehabilitation program established and nuisance properties transferred to nonprofit housing organizations.

Thursday, January 25

HF302-Peterson, S. (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Early childhood and pre-kindergarten grant programs established, kindergarten developmental assessment expanded and money appropriated.

HF303-Paymar (DFL)**Finance**

Youth intervention program grants provided and money appropriated.

HF304-Simpson (R)**Taxes**

Budget reserves provided, property tax and levy provisions modified, federal tax conformity provided, military income and pension exclusion provided, and sales tax exemptions specified.

HF305-Huntley (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 adopted establishing public policy to protect employees and the public from hazards of secondhand smoke and prohibiting people from smoking in specified areas.

HF306-Greiling (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Youth mental health screening and suicide prevention funding provided and money appropriated.

HF307-Hilstrom (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Independent School District No. 286, Brooklyn Center, innovation district program grant provided and money appropriated.

HF308-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Bovine tuberculosis control funding provided and money appropriated.

HF309-Gottwalt (R)**Health & Human Services**

Long-term care insurance income tax credit adjusted.

HF310-Dill (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Off-sales by brewpubs and small brewers regulations modified.

HF311-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Cell phones; moving violation fines doubled when committed while operating mobile phone.

HF312-Hornstein (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Council elections provided.

HF313-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Home care tax credit established and money appropriated.

HF314-Buesgens (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Senate living, per diem and mileage expense amounts determined by resolution of the full Senate.

HF315-Otremba (DFL)**Finance**

Suicide prevention grants restored and money appropriated.

HF316-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

Refugees and those seeking asylum exempted from participating in the diversionary work program.

HF317-DeLaForest (R)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare provider taxes repealed.

HF318-Jaros (DFL)**Finance**

Commission on Minnesota Ethnic Heritage established and money appropriated.

HF319-Kelliher (DFL)**Finance**

Regional library basic system support and multi-county, multi-type library systems funding provided and money appropriated.

HF320-Anzelc (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Public Employees Retirement Association nursing facilities cost reimbursement methods established and money appropriated.

HF321-Peppin (R)**Health & Human Services**

Health benefit mandates moratorium imposed.

HF322-Rukavina (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Judicial branch prohibited from imposing restrictions on political activities of represented employees unless provided by contract.

HF323-Mullery (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Tenant applicant screening fees provisions modified.

HF324-Holberg (R)**E-12 Education**

Public school employees prohibited from using public funds and resources to advocate, to pass, elect or defeat a political candidate, ballot question or pending legislation.

HF325-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Lake Zumbro restoration funding provided and money appropriated.

HF326-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Gold Star Family special license plates authorized for family members of military personnel who have died in active military service, and plate fee and registration tax exempted for certain survivors.

HF327-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

School readiness programs state aid increased and money appropriated.

HF328-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Stearns County grant provided to purchase land for Kraemer Lake Park and money appropriated.

HF329-Carlson (DFL)**Finance**

Intermediate school districts authorized to engage in short-term borrowing in anticipation of incoming funds.

HF330-Anderson, S. (R)**Taxes**

Telecommuting income tax credit provided.

HF331-Westrom (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sex offender tracking and monitoring bracelets required upon release from prison, penalties prescribed and money appropriated.

HF332-Hosch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

People with life-threatening medical conditions allowed to spend down excess income under MinnesotaCare.

HF333-Lillie (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State employees compensated for time they were not able to work due to the 2005 partial government shutdown.

HF334-Hosch (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare income exclusions allowed for certain medical expenses.

HF335-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Stearns County grant provided to purchase property for Kraemer Lake Park, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF336-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Speech-language pathologist and audiologist master's or doctoral degree requirement imposed.

HF337-Mahoney (DFL)**Finance**

Small business growth acceleration program established, and money appropriated.

HF338-Seifert (R)**Taxes**

Adoption income tax credit authorized.

HF339-Haws (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Soldiers, veterans and peace officers exempted from requirements relating to state firearms safety certificate as a prerequisite to purchasing a hunting license.

HF340-Slawik (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Candidates and campaign workers authorized to have access to multiple unit residences for campaign and election purposes.

HF341-Gottwalt (R)**Health & Human Services**

Stearns and St. Louis counties group residential housing provider moratorium exceptions provided.

HF342-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Mentoring grant for children of incarcerated parents authorized, and money appropriated.

HF343-Cornish (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Remote-controlled animal noise callers exempted from the general prohibition on using radios to take game animals.

HF344-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Olmsted County municipal solid waste combustor expansion authorized, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF345-Severson (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

All-electric single family dwellings exempted from carbon monoxide alarm installation requirement.

HF346-Severson (R)**Taxes**

City aid local government aid base increased for certain cities.

HF347-Gardner (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Yard waste bags required to be compostable.

HF348-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

St. Cloud State University National Hockey Center improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF349-Solberg (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 4, McGregor, declining enrollment grant authorized and money appropriated.

HF350-Zellers (R)**Finance**

Highway 610 four-lane freeway project completion matching funds provided and money appropriated.

HF351-Kohls (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Life sentence imposed for people convicted of three or more violent felonies.

HF352-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators, constitutional officers and commissioners prohibited from lobbying for one year after termination of office.

HF353-Bigham (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators, constitutional officers, agency heads and certain legislative employees prohibited from lobbying for one year after termination of office.

HF354-Anzelc (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Timber harvesting local economic impact statement required.

HF355-Nornes (R)**Finance**

Academic competitiveness highlighting individual excellence and valuing education grant program established and money appropriated.

HF356-Kalin (DFL)**Taxes**

Taylor's Falls border city development zone powers authorized.

HF357-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Lake County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.

HF358-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

Cook County higher education project funding provided and money appropriated.

HF359-Hansen (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Airports Commission expanded to include mayors.

HF360-Ruud (DFL)**Finance**

Intermediate school district member districts authorized to levy for school safety activities at facilities operated by the intermediate district.

HF361-Welti (DFL)**Taxes**

Regional investment income and franchise tax credit provided.

HF362-Hortman (DFL)**Taxes**

Anoka County deed and mortgage tax authorized, and environmental response fund created.

HF363-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Employee organization provided access to employees at certain meetings, card-check procedures provided for certifying an exclusive representative, and tax treatment of employer expenditures in opposing unionization efforts specified.

HF364-Olin (DFL)**Finance**

Appropriating money for bovine tuberculosis disease transmission prevention.

HF365-Greiling (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Modifying the alternative teacher pay calculation for intermediate school districts.

HF366-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Increasing equity revenue for districts above the 95th percentile.

Budget continued from page 4

(DFL-Duluth), chairman of the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee, asked why the governor's proposal stops at that particular number.

"Sixty-five thousand are already eligible. Why aren't we pushing for them, too? We can really do more," Huntley said.

[Rep. Paul Thissen](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Health and Human Services Committee, offered a more general critique of the governor's health care proposals.

"The thing I think we have to focus on is not just the expansion of coverage, but making it more meaningful. And I don't think the governor's plan goes far enough in making sure that health care coverage is meaningful," Thissen said.

Veterans

Pawlenty put forth a veterans and military package that more than doubles the Department of Veterans Affairs' budget and phases out the state income tax on military pay and pensions over a four-year period. It also provides college tuition assistance for eligible veterans and their dependents and additional funds for a number of veterans support and outreach programs, including new money for veterans assistance offices on college campuses.

"We better have, as a state — as a priority for this legislative session — a generous and robust veterans package, and we've outlined one that I think is aggressive but suitable and sustainable," Pawlenty said.

Doubling the Department of Veterans

Affairs' budget allows for a substantial increase in programming, but some question whether the current staffing level has the capabilities of "taking it all on."

"We want to make sure, as we move forward, that the budget not only addresses programming, but staffing needs. We don't want things to fall through the cracks because there aren't enough bodies," said [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Division of the House Finance Committee.

Energy

Pawlenty's budget proposals include his "Next Generation Energy Plan," a \$40 million package that would fund new research in renewable energy, and help establish 1,500 new E-85 ethanol fueling stations throughout Minnesota.

[Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), chairman of the Energy Finance and Policy Division of the House Finance Committee, declined to discuss specifics, but said he was skeptical about the sources of the new funding.

"I think the goals that the governor has expressed in his budget are good, but I want to make sure before we go too far with this that it's not at the expense of something else," Hilty said.

Public safety

The governor's budget recommendations include new funding for state troopers, correctional institutions, offender supervision, the CrimNet criminal justice

information system and the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) communications system, among other things. But some House DFLers say it's not enough.

"There's not enough going into drug and mental health rehabilitation," said [Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. "There are a lot of people going into the prison system who abuse drugs or have mental problems. If we don't start addressing these problems now, we're going to have problems later."

Transportation

Some of Democrats' harshest criticism of Pawlenty's budget proposals came in the area of transportation.

"I think that the Legislature will take the leadership role in terms of having the conversation with Minnesotans about what they need in the transportation area," Kelliher said, citing the governor's recommendation of \$100 million in trunk highway bonding as inadequate.

Kelliher mentioned a "bipartisan" bill, sponsored by [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) and [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), that would raise the gas tax, as a proposal the House will likely be bringing forth. 🗽

— CRAIG GREEN, SONJA HEGMAN, PATTY OSTBERG,
MIA SIMPSON, MIKE COOK AND LEE ANN SCHUTZ
ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE.

Pensions continued from page 13

but in exchange they'd have the enhanced security of a fully funded fund and improved benefit increases for the near term.

Right now, under the formula, the most they can receive is a 2.5 percent increase,

Hauer noted. Employers would contribute additional funds upfront for a reduced risk of future deficits.

The report notes this sort of change could result in court battles, although a package that would include tradeoffs would more likely

meet legal standards rather than a straight reduction in benefits by itself.

"There will be a bill before us at some point," said [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman. 🗽

Seatbelts continued from page 14

Not all in agreement

Among those not supporting the bill are Gary Fincel from Prior Lake and Charles Samuelson, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota.

Fincel said law enforcement personnel should focus on other problematic drivers, such as those who are intoxicated or driving recklessly.

"I would just as soon have them protect me from those drivers, than to have them protect me from myself," he said.

In a statement shared with the committee, Samuelson expressed concern about the violation of constitutional rights, especially for minority residents.

He wrote, "It will likely result in increased incidences of racial profiling on Minnesota highways, thereby magnifying the racial

disparities that already exist in our criminal justice system. At a minimum, this bill should include provisions to address racial profiling before granting law enforcement even more power to inflict justice on motorists based on their race."

A companion, [SF16](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), has been approved by two committees, and awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. 🗽

2007-08 Minnesota Senate

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

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota teachers

| | |
|--|----------|
| Number of teachers in state in 2006 | 55,237 |
| In 2003 | 56,142 |
| Percent of employed teachers who retired in 2006 | 2.5 |
| Average percent of teachers retiring in last five years | 2.3 |
| Licensure candidates prepared by Minnesota colleges and universities in 2006 | 5,169 |
| Number of undergraduate programs in which these people were enrolled | 70 |
| Number of graduate programs | 77 |
| Between 2002 and 2006, percent decrease in the number of teachers | |
| prepared outside Minnesota | 30 |
| Percent increase of teachers prepared in-state | 7 |
| Percent decrease in overall teachers granted initial teaching licenses | 8 |
| New teachers hired in Minnesota in 2001 | 2,728 |
| Percent who left their teaching assignment after one year | 26 |
| Percent who left after their second year | 13 |
| Percent teaching in the same district five years after being hired | 48 |
| Approximate percent of new teachers hired in 2000 who were still teaching | |
| five years after being hired in a Minnesota district | 69 |
| Temporary limited licenses granted by the Board of Teaching from 2002 to 2006 | |
| allowing someone to teach in subject content areas for which they may | |
| not be fully licensed when a school district has attempted, but is unable to | |
| hire a fully licensed teacher | 5,494 |
| Number of National Teachers of the Year to come from Minnesota since | |
| the program began in 1952 | 4 |
| State rank | 2 |
| Percentage of public school secondary teachers who majored in the core | |
| academic subjects they teach | 86 |
| U.S. average, as percent | 64 |
| Average Minnesota teacher salary in 2004-05 | \$46,906 |
| National average | \$47,808 |
| Wage growth, as percent, for average Minnesota wage earner in last 11 years | 49 |
| Average teacher wage growth, as percent | 28 |
| Student-teacher ratio in public K-12 schools in 2005 | 16:1 |

Sources: [Teacher Supply and Demand](#), [Department of Education](#), January 2007; [Council of Chief State School Officers](#); [Education Minnesota](#); [National Education Association](#).

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