

# SESSION WEEKLY



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**RHYMING LINES  
A WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT  
STATE'S DRIVE TO EXCELLENCE**

HF367- HF568

## SESSION WEEKLY

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

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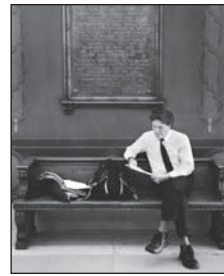
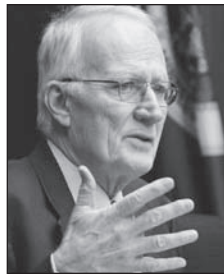
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**On the cover:** After testifying, Rashlin Robinson, takes a picture of the members of the House E-12 Education Committee and the House K-12 Finance Division while Qsashu Black, right, testifies about the LifeLine Youth Off Street Ministry, part of Community Justice Partners. Legislators took part in a joint hearing at the Glover-Suddeth Community Center in North Minneapolis Jan. 30. Raven Shambley, left, Starletta Leslie, back left and Latanza Freeman, the ministry's president and CEO, also came forward as the other testified.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid





PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

## Watershed trouble

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, managing water resources is complicated

By Nick Busse

**"S**wiss cheese" is how [Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) describes Minnesota's system of managing its water resources.

"We've got holes all over," Lanning said.

According to a new [report](#) from the Office of the Legislative Auditor, he's right — and the state's top water management watchdog, the [Board of Water and Soil Resources](#), is leaving more holes than it should.

Better known by its acronym, BWSR (informally pronounced "BOW-ser"), the board is responsible for supporting and overseeing watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts and other local entities that work to protect and improve the state's more than 13 million acres of lakes, streams and wetlands.

At least, that's what those organizations are supposed to do. Sometimes they don't, and that's when the board is supposed to step in. But according to Legislative Auditor James Nobles, the board has been neglecting its oversight duties.

"While some watershed management organizations are effective, some are not," Nobles said, adding that BWSR has been "too slow to act, and sometimes reluctant to get involved" when those organizations struggle or become inefficient.

Nobles presented the key findings of the watershed management report Jan. 25 to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee, which took no immediate action.

Charging that BWSR is "controlled by local interests," Nobles recommended making its executive director appointed by, and

more directly accountable to, the governor, as well as expanding the board's oversight responsibilities and increasing its statutory powers.

"To meet the challenges of the future, we think BWSR's governing structure should be changed, and with that change we will have a stronger, more effective and more accountable watershed management system in Minnesota," Nobles said.

But in the course of his testimony, Nobles touched on the larger issue of watershed management in general — an inherently complicated undertaking involving some 14 state and federal agencies as well as 11 different types of local government organizations and nonprofits.

"There's a real mixed up and complicated system out there," Nobles said.

In fact, the biggest challenge in protecting, preserving and restoring water quality for the state's 11,842 lakes and 69,200 miles of rivers and streams might be simply bringing order to a system that some describe as chaotic.

### The bigger picture

A watershed, defined by the [Department of Natural Resources](#) as "the total land area

from which water drains into a single stream or lake," serves as a kind of basic, fundamental unit for managing the state's water resources. The U.S. Geological Survey has identified 84 major watersheds in Minnesota, which it further breaks down into approximately 5,600 minor watersheds.

The responsibility for managing watersheds falls primarily to a complex, often overlapping and sometimes competing network of 46 watershed districts, 23 water management organizations, 91 soil and water conservation districts and 80 Greater Minnesota counties.

Don't even bother asking who does what; it's complicated. In fact, that's part of the problem.

"I think most of us who go in and, for example, vote for our soil and water conservation commissioner don't have any idea what we're voting for or what their responsibilities are," Nobles said.

Generally speaking, responsibilities associated with managing watersheds include monitoring and reducing pollution and preventing flooding. Somewhat ironically, watershed management largely involves governing land use practices, which often determine where water flows and what pollutants it picks up along the way. The trouble, according to BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke, is that every watershed is different and requires a relatively unique approach.

"There really is no one-size-fits-all approach," he said. "Each watershed, its issues and solutions require a customized application of policy and science."

First Reading continued on page 4

## A lack of oversight

Whether citizens understand what their local watershed district or water management organization does is one issue; whether the people who run them do is another.

The report states that the performance of watershed organizations is “mixed,” with some successfully improving water quality and reducing the risk of floods while others flounder, struggling to implement basic management plans and “move beyond general administration and planning tasks.”

In fact, there is such a thing as a watershed horror story. [Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids), who showed up to the Jan. 25 meeting with a group of angry constituents in tow, described how the South Two River Watershed District collected some \$800,000 in taxes over a period of 20 years and did not have “even one project completed.”

The residents of that district eventually grew so frustrated that they petitioned BWSR to terminate the district altogether, which it did in August 2006. But Severson criticized

BWSR for not taking action earlier, even neglecting to make the district submit its annual report.

“In 20 years, they had submitted one report,” Severson said. “BWSR had the responsibility to make sure that those reports were filed; it didn’t happen.”

In another example cited in the report, the soil and water conservation district for Hennepin County, the Hennepin Conservation District, fell apart due to “internal turmoil,” with board members suing each other. The county withdrew its funding for the board in 2003, but BWSR continued doling out grants to the district even after it had become “essentially dismantled.”

## Fixing BWSR

The recommendation to change BWSR’s governance structure so that its executive director would be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate became a point of some contention.

Randy Kramer, chairman of the board, refrained from commenting on many of the report’s specific findings, but did take

issue with the gubernatorial appointment recommendation.

“We, the board, feel that it’s essential that the Board of Water and Soil Resources hire the executive director,” Kramer said, adding that the board used a rigorous selection process for executive director candidates.

Some committee members were also skeptical of the recommendation. [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) wondered aloud whether BWSR’s problems were less an issue of governance than one of a lack of resources.

“It’s my opinion that BWSR has been drastically under-funded,” Ozment said, noting that the board was hit hard during recent budget shortfalls.

Nobles agreed that BWSR had limited resources, but disputed Ozment’s notion that funding was the primary problem.

“We think, just philosophically, that as an executive branch agency, that there ought to be more direct accountability to the governor and to the Legislature — not to a board that is dominated by local interests,” Nobles said.

Lanning, meanwhile, offered a larger perspective, arguing that the state needs a more comprehensive overall approach to watershed management.

“How are we going to get a handle on this with an approach that is hit-and-miss?” Lanning said. 🐼

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***“I think most of us who go in and, for example, vote for our soil and water conservation commissioner don’t have any idea what we’re voting for or what their responsibilities are.”***

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— Jim Nobles, Legislative Auditor

## SPECIAL TEST



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

As Rep. Connie Ruth watches, Rep. Sondra Erickson holds up a giant No. 2 pencil to show the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division that she is prepared to take a specially developed Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment test during the division’s Jan. 29 hearing.

**Editor's note:** The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Jan. 24-Feb. 1 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to [www.leg.state.mn](http://www.leg.state.mn) and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

## AGRICULTURE

### Spending concerns

More money for research is on the legislative wish list for just about every group representing the state's commodities and producers.

Representatives for the state's various crop growers and livestock producers told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Jan. 30 they are concerned that state dollars allocated to the University of Minnesota for agriculture research will be shifted in the direction of emerging fuels. They say research dollars are needed to benefit all sectors of agriculture. No division action was taken.

As an example, Kenneth Asp, chairman of the Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotion Council, said that while the number of soybean and corn acres is on the rise, the number of acres devoted to wheat has been on the decline since the late-1990s. He said this differential can be attributed to the number of acres dedicated to produce crops used in the production of ethanol.

He said there is not enough wheat being grown to support research through the "check-off." This United States Department of Agriculture administered program refers to the collection of a fee for, in the case of commodities, every bushel sold and then given to a neutral body for specific uses.

"We need research to turn this trend around, or wheat will go the way of barley and oats, so that we're actually importing from other countries," Asp said.

**Rep. Al Juhnke** (DFL-Willmar), chairman of the division, said last biennium's \$50 million annual appropriation to the university's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences had little legislative direction on how the money should be spent.

This year the division will take a closer look at the research appropriation, he said, and encouraged the various agriculture groups to offer suggestions on how these dollars should be allocated — whether for production agriculture, renewable energy or other emerging needs.

### Licensing concerns

Without University of Minnesota research, neither the blueberry nor the grape would be able to thrive in this climate. Nor would there be a Haroldson or Honeycrisp apple.

Granting an exclusive license for a new university-developed apple variety, "MN 1914," to a single orchard, however, drew the attention of growers and the Legislature last year.

In response, a law was enacted requesting the university to refrain from implementing the "MN 1914" apple license. The law also called for a task force to review the university's licensing procedures and to report back to the Legislature.

The **Plant Licensing Task Force** report shows that the university has developed more than 800 plant varieties. Royalties from licensed varieties generate about \$1.5 million a year for the institution.

Beverly Durgan, director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station and chairwoman of the task force, told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Jan. 31 that plant varieties, such as an apple, take many years to develop, and that royalties help defray some of the costs.

"One of the reasons we have gone to licensing some of the varieties is then those royalties are used to sustain our breeding program," Durgan said. It also supplements funding from the state and commodity groups.

The Honeycrisp apple, last year named the state fruit, overall has generated \$4 million in royalties, Durgan said, adding that the patent goes off the apple in two years. She said there are high hopes that the "MN 1914" apple could produce double that amount in royalties.

She said several issues surfaced from task force discussions regarding licensing: the need for more communication with the agriculture community about variety release procedures; monitoring of exclusive releases to ensure the interests of the agricultural public are considered; consideration of funding challenges faced by the breeding program; and how to get a better return on investment.

The committee took no action.

## BIOSCIENCES

### More bucks for bioscience

A bill approved by a House committee Jan. 30 would provide money to fund a bioscience partnership between the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic.

### Committees take to the road

The House Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for setting spending targets in the House, is scheduled to hold a meeting at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 5 at Pilot Knob Elementary School, 1436 Lone Oak Road in Eagan.

The House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee is scheduled to meet at the Burnsville City Hall, 100 Civic Center Parkway, at 7 p.m. Feb. 7.

**HF194**, sponsored by **Rep. Kim Norton** (DFL-Rochester), would create an ongoing annual appropriation of \$15 million for the Minnesota Partnership for Biotechnology and Medical Genomics, a joint venture created in 2003 to help spur growth in the state's biotech industry. It was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee.

Mark Paller, assistant vice president for research at the university, said the partnership has two primary goals: to "improve life" and to stimulate the state's economy. Among its numerous projects: new drugs for cancer, research into neuromuscular diseases and early detection of cardiovascular disease.

"There is a lot of competition in the country and around the world for bioscience development," Paller said. "Both Mayo and the University of Minnesota have come to understand that we are stronger working together in this environment than we are separately and in competition."

Committee members argued over whether the \$15 million should be an ongoing appropriation or one-time money. **Rep. Mike Beard** (R-Shakopee) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have created a sunset date for the funding, arguing that ongoing appropriations put the state budget on "autopilot," which he said leads to budget crises.

**Rep. Paul Thissen** (DFL-Mpls) disagreed, arguing ongoing funding would prove the state's commitment to bioscience and help "attract smart people" to the state.

"Above all, what our goal should be is to try to attract bright minds to Minnesota. That's going to be our future, and it sounds like ... this ongoing funding is a really critically important part of that," Thissen said.

Committee Chairman **Rep. Tim Mahoney** (DFL-St. Paul) urged committee members to think big on bioscience and its potential as an economic engine for the state.

"This state has started to have a small vision. My hope for this committee is that we



have a larger vision. ...This state should be investing millions in [bioscience].”

The bill now goes to the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division. A companion, [SF176](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

## BONDING

### Cultural center word change

As a result of a one word omission in a bonding proposal last year, the Asian Pacific Cultural Center could not get immediate access to funds approved for its building project.

The Legislature approved \$400,000 for the center's design in last year's bonding law, but the word “pre-design” was not included in the original bill.

“This is just to make sure the cultural center has access to the money so they can move forward with the city,” [Rep. Cy Thao](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the sponsor of [HF87](#), told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Jan. 30. Approved by the committee, the bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Naomi Chu, executive director of the center, said she was “surprised” the word “pre-design” was needed in the law. She added that no other wording would change, but the delay means the center's location will be different, and that the final price tag will likely change. Right now, the estimated cost of the center is \$6 million.

The 65,000 square-foot center will be located at the former Hamm's Brewery site on Minnehaha Avenue in St. Paul, instead of along the city's University Avenue. Four contiguous buildings will be retrofitted to create the center. Current plans call for the center to include a gallery and library center, a banquet room that will accommodate up to 500 people, a 265-seat theater designed for performing arts and cinematic viewing, the center's administrative office, a commercial kitchen, a gift shop, 15-20 offices for tenants and 15-20 classrooms.

A companion bill, [SF257](#), sponsored by [Sen. Mee Moua](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

### Gubernatorial recommendations

Unless the state wants 1,200-pound granite panels falling from the [Department of Transportation](#) building, they will need to fix them this year.

This is one of several recommendations in the governor's proposed \$69.8 million [capital](#)

[budget](#) for 2007. Of the total, \$59.8 million would come from general obligation bonds, and \$10 million would be for user-financed bonding for the Rural Finance Authority.

The request comes on the heels of nearly \$1 billion capital budget laws in 2005 and 2006.

Typically, large bonding bills are done in the even-numbered years of a session, with a smaller bill passed in odd-number years for urgent projects.

Finance Commissioner Tom Hanson told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Jan. 30 that fencing surrounds spots of the building, restricting people from walking in areas at high risk of falling debris. The amount recommended for the repairs is \$11.8 million. The division took no action.

Other urgent projects include:

- \$37.9 million to pay half the cost of a new arena at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center;
- \$10 million in Rural Finance Authority loans;
- \$2.2 million to replace and re-insulate mold-infested ductwork at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Oak Park Heights and \$3.9 million to update the perimeter system at the facility;
- \$2.2 million to buy three available parcels next to the state-owned Stassen Building in St. Paul for parking;
- \$1.5 million to reduce the flow of clear water into the wastewater system at the Minnesota Zoo; and
- \$200,000 to construct Phase III of the Stillwater Flood Control project, to help protect the historic downtown from flooding.

### Historic renovations

Historic roadside properties along the Great River Road could be improved with a nearly \$4.3 million appropriation spelled out in [HF146](#).

“This would provide funding for repair and restoration of the historic roadside properties, such as wayside rest areas, historical markers and important overlook sites along the Great River Road,” said [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill's sponsor.

Established in state law, the road runs along the Mississippi river from its headwaters in Itasca State Park to the Iowa border. It is part of a national scenic byway system running through several states.

The bill was approved Jan. 31 by the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee and referred to the House Transportation Finance Division. Johnson would like to see the bill laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus transportation

finance bill.

“We're working to protect the scenic, natural and historic resources along the Great River Road Corridor in order to protect those features that make the Great River Road a popular tourist destination for Minnesota,” said David Kelliher, legislative liaison for the Minnesota Historical Society.

“The era in which these resources were constructed is an important part of our state's history and our nation's history,” he said. “Many of these roadside features are on the National Register of Historic Places, and all those in the proposal are on the national register.” By statute, state agencies are responsible for protecting historic features.

Included in the proposal are 12 restoration projects, including the Camp Ripley entrance walls, the Fort Beauharnois Historical Marker near Lake Pepin and the La Crescent State Entry Marker. Many have crumbling rocks or concrete. It is estimated that the properties are deteriorating at 5 percent to 10 percent a year, while restoration costs increase by about the same percentage annually. Preliminary engineering reports and cost estimates for possible future restorations of 10 other sites would also be completed with the money.

A companion bill, [SF288](#), sponsored by [Senate Minority Leader David Jensen](#) (R-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

## CONSUMERS

### Social Security number usage

A Social Security number is needed to apply for a mortgage, credit card or long-term financing on a motor vehicle, and sometimes it is even asked for on a job application.

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), [HF131](#) would further restrict the use of Social Security numbers.

Approved Jan. 26 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, the bill next goes to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. It has no Senate companion.

“We believe very strongly that this bill goes a long way towards limiting the number of Social Security numbers that are floating out there that may ultimately result in identity theft,” said Mark Ireland, assistant attorney general in the office's [Consumer Division](#). More than 3,000 such thefts occurred in the state last year.

The bill is a clarification of a [2005 law](#), scheduled to take effect July 1, 2007, that in part restricts businesses from printing a Social Security number on a card needed to utilize the business's products or services, or put a

person's number on materials mailed to them. However, businesses that used the number in those ways before the law's effective date are to be exempt, if certain conditions are met. This bill would eliminate that provision.

It would also add two requirements that must be met before an individual would be required to transmit a Social Security number over the Internet; prohibit a person or non-government entity from disclosing an individual's Social Security number to a nonaffiliated third party; and a person or non-government entity could not "refuse to do business with an individual because he or she will not consent to the receipt by the person of his or her Social Security number, unless in connection with the transaction."

Among concerns expressed by business representatives were that, without access to the number, it could be harder to meet consumer needs, and it might make the identity theft problem worse by taking away a tool that prevents identification theft and fraud.

## CRIME

### Support needed for youth

When it comes to helping youth caught up in the juvenile court system, there are no easy answers.

Representatives from the judicial branch, law enforcement and the [Department of Corrections](#) spoke at the Jan. 30 meeting of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee about the difficulties faced in supporting youth in the juvenile court system. The committee took no action.

Ramsey County Judge Judith M. Tilsen said that in adult court, the objective is often to get people in, sentence them and move on. But in juvenile court, there is an effort made to touch the young person's life. "We want to talk to these kids," said Tilsen. "We want to tell them that they have to go to school, and that they have to follow the rules."

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) asked if there was anything that needed to be changed.

Although more resources are always a factor, there need to be more programs available to youth before they get involved in the system, said Tanya M. Bransford, a Hennepin County Juvenile Court judge. Resources such as after school programs and effective mental health services are critical, she said.

On behalf of the Minnesota Police Juvenile Unit, Lt. Bryan Schafer said that juveniles account for 17 percent of all arrests in Minneapolis, with young black men

accounting for 70 percent of that number. Of the 4,000 juvenile cases the department has, 11,000 youth are involved.

Police are working with schools to aggressively look for students who are truant and take them back to school. Getting youth back in class is a way to prevent them from committing other offenses, said Schafer.

Simeon Wagner, corrections unit supervisor for Hennepin County Juvenile Probation, said it can be frustrating trying to convince some kids of the importance of school. Providing youth an education is one of the most important things we can do, said Wagner. "How we get that done is another issue."

### Prisoner reentry given priority

Prisoners released from Minnesota prisons need adequate support as they reenter the outside world.

This was the message to the House Public Safety Finance Division Jan. 31 from representatives of four different organizations. The division took no action.

Marcus Pope, associate director of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, spoke of the need to address domestic violence when prisoners reenter society. There needs to be an expansion of the approach to address all issues from the prison to the community, he said.

The institute advocates an action plan before and after offenders are released, including: protecting women who want to terminate relationships; ensuring the safety of intimate partners and children during the offender's incarceration and post-release; and preventing men from using children to manipulate and gather information about the other parent.

Fred LeFleur, senior department director with the Hennepin County Department of Corrections, spoke about STS (Sentence to Service) Homes Project, a program that provides inmates with training in construction so that they can gain employment once released.

There needs to be more focus on motivating inmates to get training, he said. "The inmates weren't employable when they went to prison, so the expectation that they will [be employable] after 36 to 48 months in prison is unrealistic."

Claudia Wasserman, director of workforce development services at the Wilder Foundation, spoke of her organization's efforts to help offenders enter the workforce.

The Wilder Foundation Job Club prepares clients for job interviews and teaches them how to win the confidence of potential employers.

The NetWork, led by Steve Nelson, is new a program that provides services, training and a positive environment to adult men who have a history of substance abuse, mental illness, chronic unemployment and incarceration.

## EDUCATION

### Arts center funding

What do stage and screen star Debbie Allen, music superstar Janet Jackson and the 1980s movie and TV show "Fame" have to do with Minnesota education?

Not much according to Pam Paulson, deputy director of the Perpich Center for Arts Education in Golden Valley. "We got a lot of comparisons to 'Fame' that didn't hold up," she told the House K-12 Finance Division Jan. 31.

La Guardia School of Performing Arts, featured in "Fame," had kids dancing and singing in the lunch room and not much education going on. However, Minnesota's center is a 310-student public school that teaches dance, literary arts, media arts, music, theater and visual arts, in addition to core subjects of English, math, science, social studies and world languages.

The center received nearly \$13.25 million in state money for the current biennium, which represents 88.4 percent of its budget, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty is requesting a 3.9 percent increase for the next two years. Other revenue sources include student fees, federal dollars, interest earnings and gifts.

However, the numbers are still down from levels a few years ago.

"Our budget was \$7.8 million, then it was cut to \$6.6 million. We're still trying to deal with the cuts," said Executive Director Nathan Davis.

"This school is like a diamond in Minnesota. How does the average student get to know the school is available? I didn't hear about 'til I came to the Legislature," said Rep. Denise Ditttrich (DFL-Champlin).

"We send materials to every school, library, and all of the information is on the Web site; however, most of our students come by word-of-mouth," Paulson said.

The center also aims to improve K-12 education for all of Minnesota students and educators through innovative programs and partnerships centered in the arts. A development group provides access to research and best practices that promote teacher, artist and school effectiveness.

### State academies funding

The Minnesota academies for the [deaf](#) and [blind](#) would receive a slight increase in funding under the governor's budget proposal.

The plan calls for approximately \$27.5 million in the 2008-09 biennium.

"We appreciate the extra 2 percent increase, but it probably will not be enough to cover our needs," said Linda Mitchell, superintendent of the academies near Faribault.

"Our students have the same problem as other children around the state, the only difference is that our student's ears just don't work," Mitchell told the House K-12 Finance Division Jan. 31. The division took no action.

Of the nearly \$1.1 million proposed increase in the governor's [budget](#), nearly \$600,000 is for employee compensation, \$200,000 is for installation and maintenance of a security system, \$182,000 is for technology upgrades and \$100,000 is to offset increases in the cost of the mainstreaming contract between the academies and Faribault Public Schools.

Coursework at both academies is designed to meet Minnesota's academic standards and graduation requirements. Curriculum is expanded to meet the unique educational needs of the students.

The academies have competitive sports teams that participate against other schools.

"It's great seeing blind kids out there wrestling, and having coached them it's an inspiration," said [Rep. Bob Dettmer](#) (R-Forest Lake).

Plus, many students are away from home, and stay in residence halls.

"At the residence halls is where a lot of the education comes from," said Olda Boubin, director of education at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind. He explained that many blind students have an adult aide with them in school, and have a difficult time making friends. "How many kids do you know who want to talk with a kid that has an adult by his side all day long," he said.

"If the student has the proper tools to learn, like Braille books, and the proper technology there is no holding back the student," he said.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Pay equity gap almost closed

Slowly, but surely, the pay equity gap between men and women who work for the state has closed.

Speaking before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs

Committee Jan. 31, Faith Zwemke, pay equity coordinator for the Department of Employee Relations, said, "The most amazing statistic in the world about the wage gap is that women who work for the state of Minnesota make 97 cents to the dollar that men make who work for the state of Minnesota."

The national average was 76.5 percent in 2004.

In 1982, women made 74 cents to every dollar men made. That year, Minnesota passed a pay equity law for state employees. A similar law was passed for city, county, school and other government employees two years later.

The purpose of these laws is "to eliminate sex-based pay disparity in public employees within the state," said Zwemke.

According to 2000 census data, Minnesota women have the highest labor force participation rate in the country and earn more than the national average, said Patty Tanji, representing the Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota.

Tanji also said that many women now employed by the government were once eligible for food stamps and other welfare. Pay equity raises have lifted families out of poverty.

The committee took no action.

## ENERGY

### Renewable energy standards

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) would set a more ambitious — and mandated — renewable energy standard for Minnesota.

[HF4](#) would gradually increase the percentage of the state's electricity that comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable energy sources to 11 percent by 2013, 15 percent by 2015 and 25 percent by 2020.

The House Energy Finance and Policy

## EARLY CHILDHOOD CHOICE



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

During a Jan. 30 news conference, Michael Landsman, 2, plays with Legos as Rep. Nora Slawik, left, and Sen. Tarryl Clark discuss proposed early childhood legislation that would give parents more choice in education, and would invest in quality early childhood care and education.

Division held its first of three scheduled hearings on the bill Jan. 31. It took no action.

Whereas previous legislation required only a "good faith" effort, the new standards would be legally binding for all of the state's power companies.

"We have the responsibility, I believe, to my generation and those to follow, to take aggressive positions on technologies that are doable, that have been done, and can be done aggressively and prudently without disrupting the market," Peterson said.

The bill includes a provision for a flexible renewable energy credit system, whereby companies that cannot meet renewable standards can purchase credits from companies that exceed the standards.

John Dunlop, senior outreach representative for the American Wind Energy Association,



said that contrary to popular belief, higher renewable energy standards actually result in lower electricity prices by inviting new companies into the market and creating competition.

"If you establish a standard, it really invites competition, and that competition tends to keep the prices down," Dunlop said.

Its companion, [SF4](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Global warming presentation

Polar explorer Will Steger told members of eight different House and Senate committees Jan. 30 that the effects of global warming are indisputable — that he has seen them with his own eyes during decades of expeditions to the north and south poles.

"The scientists have predicted some of these changes; very few people have seen them," he said.

Steger was among several speakers invited to brief lawmakers on global warming as a primer for future legislative action on the issue. He presented a slideshow of pictures and satellite photographs that show what he said were some effects of global warming: disintegrating ice shelves, melting glaciers, starving polar bear populations and endangered native cultures. He warned that the rapid melting of the polar ice cap would have dire consequences for the Earth's climate, with one of the most obvious effects being an increase in violent storms.

He urged legislators to do their part in the fight against global climate change.

"We can't wait on this," he said.

David Tilman, regents' professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Minnesota, said global warming is now regarded as fact by the vast majority of scientists and many people in the business community. He pinned the blame squarely on a dramatic increase in global carbon emissions relative to the last 400,000 years of life on Earth, creating a situation that is "totally unprecedented" in world history.

Lucinda Johnson, a researcher at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, described some of the likely effects of global warming on Minnesota's environment: longer, hotter summers; an increase in droughts, punctuated by more frequent flooding; increased weed and algal growth in lakes; declining populations among certain fish species; reduced appetite and weight gain in livestock; and an increase

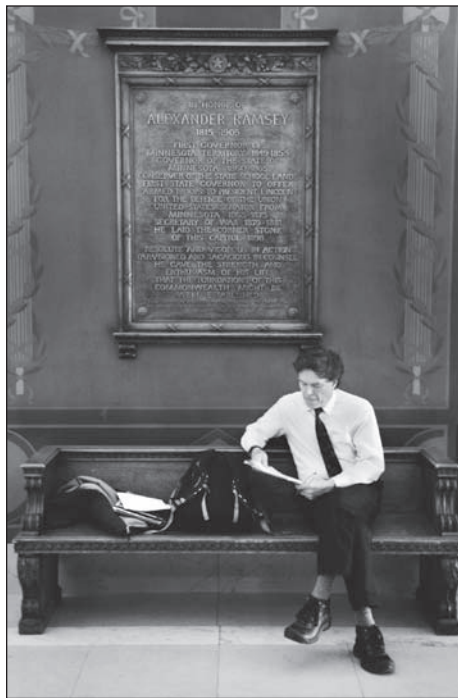


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

**Sitting on a State Capitol bench, arctic explorer Will Steger reviews his notes before speaking to a joint House and Senate informal meeting on global warming Jan. 30 in the House Chamber.**

in disease vectors like mosquitoes that can carry West Nile virus.

[House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the Legislature has an obligation to help stop global warming by taking the lead on new policies that would reduce its impacts.

"As a mom, I know that if we leave this work to our children, it may be too late," Kelliher said. "Just as the world is no longer flat ... the fact of global warming can no longer be ignored."

### Great Lakes compact passed

Minnesota could become the first state to sign a Great Lakes water usage compact more than six years in the making, if a bill passed Feb. 1 by the House becomes law.

[HF110](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), would enact the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a proposed agreement between eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces that would prohibit diversion of water outside of the Great Lakes basins. Such diversions can have significant environmental and economic impacts.

The compact is the result of years of negotiations through the Council of Great Lakes Governors, a nonpartisan partnership between the eight Great Lakes states — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. To

become effective, it must be signed into law by the governors of all eight states, ratified by the U.S. Congress, and then agreed to by the Canadian authorities.

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

Several House members expressed concern that signing the compact would be giving up the state's right to set its own water use policies, as well as granting taxation authority to a government entity over which the Legislature has no oversight.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have prevented the council from levying any sort of tax increase.

Huntley, noting that [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) supports the compact, said that due to its nature, any amendment would effectively kill it.

[Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) spoke at length against the compact, arguing that to pass it would take power away from the state, and put it in the hands of an international entity.

Passed 97-35 by the House, the bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope) is the sponsor.

### Trust fund recommendations

A bill approved by a House division would appropriate more than \$23 million from the state's environmental trust funds for 29 different projects relating to land, water and air protection.

[HF293](#), sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover), represents the recommendations of the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#). The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division approved the bill, which now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

The purpose of the LCCMR, formerly the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, is to make recommendations to the Legislature on how to use money from the state's environmental trust funds — primarily, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which derives its money mostly from lottery proceeds.

"This was the first process that we went through with the newly formed LCCMR," said Tingelstad, who co-chairs the commission.

Briefly summarized, the bill includes:

- \$12.3 million for land acquisition, for an estimated total of 17,000 acres, to protect for-

- ests, wetlands and other natural habitats;
- \$4.1 million for biological surveys and data collection of natural resources;
- \$2.9 million for various research projects;
- \$2.5 million for land restoration of an estimated 4,000 acres, including vegetation restoration and research into biological controls for invasive species; and
- \$1.3 million for administrative costs.

The current recommendations would apply to Fiscal Year 2008; a second set of recommendations will be presented for Fiscal Year 2009.

A provision relating to forest legacy easements stirred debate among division members, some of whom expressed frustration that the state was putting money into private lands whose owners deny access to the public.

**Rep. Frank Moe** (DFL-Bemidji) said many private landowners are taking advantage of state forest protection incentives without giving anything back.

“Not only do we not have recreation access guaranteed, but these large investment houses that own this property are in fact leasing out that recreation access to others, but still getting lower tax status,” Moe said.

## FAMILY

### Sick leave usage

As our society gets older, so does the number of parents who need to be cared for by their sons and daughters.

But sometimes doing so means the child has to choose between providing care for a parent and collecting a paycheck.

Such was the case of Karen Eileen, a member of AARP’s Grassroots, Education and Advocacy Team.

“When my mother needed care and help, my choice was clear. There would always be another job, but I only had one mother,” she told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Jan. 31. “We should all be able to give that kind of care to our loved ones.”

Sponsored by **Rep. Neva Walker** (DFL-Mpls), **HF219** could allow that.

Approved by the division and referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the bill, which has no Senate companion, would expand the use of sick leave benefits “for absences due to the illness of or injury to the employee’s child, spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent, or stepparent.” Under current law, the use of sick leave benefits is only for the care of an injured or sick child.

“This would be especially beneficial to those

of us that have parents who are aging,” Walker said. “My son is precious to me. However, my mother is just as precious to me.”

Eileen said that unpaid family members provide 80 percent to 90 percent of the long-term care provided in society. “Working caregivers perform a nearly impossible balancing act. Caregivers feel guilty about neglecting both sides of their lives, even as they are exhausting themselves trying to keep up,” she said.

The bill would apply to employers with at least 21 employees at a site. To be eligible, an employee must have been employed at least half-time by the employer for 12 consecutive months.

While having no issue with the expansion, **Rep. Carol McFarlane** (R-White Bear Lake) is concerned with the cost of lost productivity of a missing employee.

“Our rules are going to have to adjust to the flow of the baby boomers,” said **Rep. Larry Haws** (DFL-St. Cloud). “You’d think most companies would be doing it naturally, and we wouldn’t need a law.”

## GAME & FISH

### Invasive species resolution

A bill approved by a House division Jan. 29 would urge Congress to take action to stop the spread of invasive aquatic species into the Great Lakes and other waters.

**HF74**, sponsored by **Rep. Rick Hansen** (DFL-South St. Paul), would urge Congress to enact federal legislation requiring all international ships to disinfect and sterilize their ballast water — a frequently cited means of spreading exotic species — prior to discharging it into U.S. rivers and lakes.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill, which now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. A companion, **SF65**, sponsored by **Sen. Katie Sieben** (DFL-Newport), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

Hansen said the bill especially targets microorganisms such as the viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) fish-killing virus that has been found in lakes St. Clair, Erie and Ontario.

“The urgency now is that we may be moving into the pathogen area,” Hansen said.

Gary Botzek, executive director of the Minnesota Conservation Federation, explained that previous federal legislation, which required such ships to discharge their ballast water on land or at least 200 miles from shore, failed to stem the proliferation

of invasive aquatic species.

**Rep. David Dill** (DFL-Crane Lake), division chairman, elaborated on Botzek’s comments, explaining that the invasive species tend to cling to the inside of the ballast tanks.

Steve Hirsch, assistant director of the Department of Natural Resources’ **Ecological Services Division**, said that ballast water has become a “major vector” for the introduction of invasive aquatic species to Minnesota, citing zebra mussels, New Zealand mudsnails and round gobies as three examples.

“It is a very difficult problem to address,” Hirsch said.

## GOVERNMENT

### Going back in time

Few people get the chance to see where and how history is preserved at the Minnesota History Center, but the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division did Jan. 29.

Nina Archabal, director of the Minnesota Historical Society, and several of her staff members, guided representatives through the center’s restricted areas. There they saw conservation labs used to preserve objects; the storage area that holds the center’s three-dimensional collections that include objects like shoes, clothing and furniture; and the archive room.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

**Members of the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division enter one of the storage facilities at the Minnesota History Center during a Jan. 29 tour. This storage space holds county and state records before they are microfilmed and then destroyed.**



The archive room is filled with boxes from floor to ceiling. The vice presidential papers of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale are included in the mix. Of all the boxes, 12,000 square feet, which equals 12,000 boxes of history, are just from railroad magnet James J. Hill, Archabal said. The room is so organized that employees can take a forklift and find specific boxes immediately.

The textile conservation lab was also on the tour. (This is open once a month for public tours.)

One of Textile Conservator Ann Frisina's jobs is to re-create original fabrics of various time periods. She uses a stereoscope, a device that serves as a camera and microscope, to take enlarged pictures of fabric fragments so she can see the patterns.

Though the history of long-time Minnesotans is prevalent at the center, the history of new immigrants to the state is becoming larger.

Bob Horton, the center's library director, said history is being made now with the influx of Somalian, Cambodian, Hmong and others to the state. Because of this, several educators want to teach cultural literacy to students. Horton said the center is trying to digitize that cultural information so teachers can access it over the Internet.

### Training for legislators

A plan to spend \$20,000 in the next fiscal year for legislator training failed to get past the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee Feb. 1.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tinglestad](#) (R-Andover), [HF13](#), rejected on a voice vote, would allow the [Legislative Coordinating Commission](#) to oversee yearly training forums for both House and Senate members.

Under the bill, the forums would include training to improve legislative skills in running effective meetings and provide opportunities for legislators and invited executive officials to interact.

State agencies pay for public employee training and legislators are also employees of the state, Tinglestad said. "Education is an important part of what we do here."

In addition to appropriated state money, the bill would authorize donations from foundations, corporations and individuals to help defray costs and would to be published on the [Legislature's Web site](#), but registered lobbyists or principals would be forbidden.

[Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) said if legislators find the training beneficial, they would be willing to pay for it themselves and suggested a fee for participation.

Tinglestad said adding a fee might detract

participants and create difficulties in budgeting for a conference ahead of time. Also, she said charging legislators might set a precedent among state agencies to charge their own employees for job training.

A companion bill, [SF130](#), sponsored by [Sen. Don Betzold](#) (DFL-Fridley), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

### Departments respond to report

Representatives from the [Department of Corrections](#) responded Jan. 30 to a substance abuse treatment [report](#) from the Office of the Legislative Auditor that was presented to members of the House Public Safety Finance Division five days earlier. No action was taken.

In part, the February 2006 report recommends more permanent beds for inmates in need of treatment, and coordination with local agencies to improve post-release substance abuse plans.

Nanette Larson, director of the department's health services unit, said that following the report's recommendations, progress has been made in several areas. There is better sharing of information with other agencies; there is a move away from short-term treatment to long-term treatment; there are more after-care treatment opportunities, including work with community-based organizations; and there are more treatment beds.

Committee members asked how the department would be able to increase the opportunities for chemical dependency treatment to more inmates. Deputy Commissioner Dennis Benson pointed out that the situation is more complicated than just providing primary care.

Despite an 83 percent increase in the prison population during the last 10 years, funding not keeping pace, and the need for more trained, certified staff, Benson said the department is methodically moving forward.

Benson also said the attention to aftercare is what will make a difference in offender re-entry to the outside world, and in their ability to live a sober life.

The department encourages inmates to participate in treatment by letting them know that if they complete the program, time will be taken off their sentence.

The report also suggests that the [Department of Human Services](#), responsible for the publicly funded programs, should have stronger leadership and more oversight

of the programs, and that the department should monitor local assessment and referral practices.

Deborah Moses, operations manager with the department, said Jan. 25 it is in the process of improving materials on assessments and will work to provide progress reports to the Legislature.

### Parity for nursing homes

A bill to level reimbursement rates for nursing homes statewide will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus health and human services finance bill.

While presenting [HF55](#) to the House Health and Human Services Finance Division Jan. 31, [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), the bill's sponsor, called it "probably the most important thing we can do this legislation session."

For almost 20 years, nursing homes have been reimbursed for services provided to Medical Assistance patients on a tiered system based on the facilities' annual projections, the level of services provided to patients and geographic region. The bill would increase payment rates from the state for operating costs of facilities in geographic groups I and II, which are located in less heavily populated regions of Minnesota. Nursing home facilities in those groups would be reimbursed at geographic group III's median rate, the highest rate available.

The total cost, according to Sviggum, would be \$22 million the first year and \$33 million annually beyond.

The proposal was heavily endorsed by testifiers, many of whom are nursing home administrators from small towns.

"If this bill is not passed, we will be forced to make deeper cuts to our direct care and our programs," said Jeff King, chief financial officer of Three Links Care Center in Northfield.

King said the center has been operating at a net loss for more than three years and his facility, at a salary level, can't effectively compete with other health care providers.

"The sad part of it is that we don't really have an unusual story," said John Boughton administrator of Kenyon Sunset Home. Boughton shared several stories of employees who left or candidates who refused a job because of pay scale and benefits. If the bill passes, his reimbursement rate would increase by \$350,000.

A companion bill, [SF139](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

## Seeking assistance

As impending federal cuts loom over the [Minnesota Family Investment Program](#), the House Health and Human Services Committee heard Jan. 25 from those most likely to suffer the consequences — program recipients and frontline workers.

Testifiers spoke of struggles with domestic abuse, early pregnancy, disability, homelessness, depression, program mandates, job searches and society. No action was taken.

Mary Randow, who finished her bachelor's degree and earned her teaching certificate while participating in MFIP, said she entered the program after leaving an abusive husband while she was pregnant with her second child.

"I don't know what I would have done without the MFIP program," she said. "I never knew I could live on so little, but it was all I needed to be safe and secure."

MFIP offers a variety of services, including supplemental cash and food money, and is often received in tandem with other governmental assistance. It is funded through the state's General Fund and federal dollars.

In 2006, Congress passed the "Deficit Reduction Act of 2005," which in part, restricts how work activities are defined, increases the proportion of those required to work, complicates monitoring procedures and redefines a formula used by state welfare programs to calculate work participation rates. Minnesota could expect as much as \$13 million in penalties annually if it doesn't meet the new requirements.

Like Randow, many of those who spoke sought further education and training while receiving assistance. They said education was their ticket to sustainability.

"The education is what we really need to be able to have a successful career," said Brenda Townsell, a mother of five.

Of their complaints, the most common was the program's work requirements, implemented in 1996, which force recipients to work, or look for work, a certain number of hours each week.

"In March 2005, I was forced to work for free for over five months in order to receive my MFIP grant of \$387 a month," said Virginia Weldon, a mother of one, who has spinal problems that make it difficult to find and keep employment. "I was forced to work 33.75 hours per week ... (really), I was only making \$2.87 an hour."

Recipients who do not meet work requirements are sanctioned and can lose portions of their assistance.

## A prescription for health care

Members of the Health and Human Services Committee received a six-step

"prescription" Jan. 30 to help "truly transform health care."

Peter Hutchinson and Maureen Reed, the Independence Party gubernatorial ticket last fall, estimated the package, which they argued must be implemented in full to be effective, would save the state approximately \$1.7 billion annually, while requiring a \$500 million to \$600 million investment for a universal, state-sponsored health care program.

Hutchinson and Reed proposed that the state cut the cost of administration and bureaucracy through several means by 2010; improve quality of care and reduce cost by concentrating on chronic disease, demographic disparities and preventative care by 2010; provide incentives to people who "take greater responsibility" for their health decisions; provide public access to costs and services for health care providers statewide; and implement public measures, such as a statewide smoking ban, to reduce contemporary health epidemics.

No action was taken on the proposal.

"I'm pretty sure we're going to spend all session getting a second opinion on your proposal," said Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague). "But I do like a lot of the ideas you have on the table."

Hutchinson and Reed's presentation

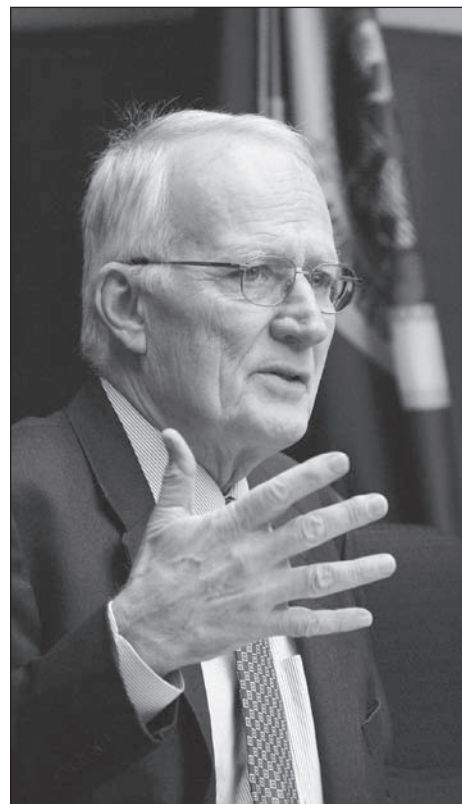


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

**Former U.S. Sen. Dave Durenberger, now a senior health policy fellow at the University of St. Thomas, gives an overview on health care policy to the House Health and Human Services Committee Jan. 30.**

followed an appearance by former U.S. Sen. Dave Durenberger, who now serves as senior health policy fellow at the University of St. Thomas. He provided a dismal analysis of the U.S. health care system. "A lot of people who are blind to what's going on believe the U.S. has the best health care system in the world," he said, while offering seven principles to guide discussion forward. Some mirrored Hutchinson and Reed's so-called health care "prescription," including providing incentives for healthy personal practices and fully disclosing cost and quality. Durenberger also said that legislators should put Minnesotans "in the driver's seat" on health care decisions.

"Trust us to know how to use information," he said. "We, together, will reduce the cost of the health care system."

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### Who'll teach the nurses?

It is widely known that a nursing shortage exists. Less known, but as equally alarming, is the reduction in the number of instructors needed to educate future nurses.

"We will need well-prepared faculty if we are going to educate these nurses that are needed," Kelli Smith, a nurse educator at Anoka-Ramsey Community College and a member of the Minnesota Nurses Association Commission on Education, told the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division Jan. 30.

Although the division took no action, [Rep. Kathy Brynaert](#) (DFL-Mankato), said, "It'll be our challenge to see if we can accept your challenge to meet the issues."

Smith said many state colleges have responded with a quantity over quality plan of increasing the number of program slots without adding faculty or additional resources.

Workload and salary are two of the most oft-mentioned reasons that nursing instructors leave their posts.

"The nursing curriculum is constantly changing and must be updated, making preparation to teach time consuming and labor intensive," Smith said. "Nursing educators must also maintain clinical competence."

At Minnesota State University, Mankato, 33 full-time nursing equivalents are being filled by 17 full-time faculty members, of which 11 hold doctoral degrees, said Sonja Meiers, an associate professor and graduate programs coordinator in the university's School of Nursing.

She said nurse educators can live in an



“unfortunate paradox” where more education can lead to less salary.

“In a recent survey of our graduates, we discovered that the average salary for a baccalaureate graduate after one year of experience is \$49,000. The average salary for a nurse practitioner in specialty care is \$74,000. The starting salary for a master’s prepared assistant professor nurse educator is about \$40,000 to \$45,000, depending on years of experience.”

At MSU, Mankato, they are recruiting for nine open positions, but are competing against schools that can offer more perks. For example, a Vermont school offered a candidate \$10,000 in loan forgiveness and relocation expenses.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### The right to transfer

Committee approval was given to a bill that would dissolve a governmental unit and transfer its belongings to a city.

Sponsored by [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), [HF180](#) would dissolve the Hibbing Area Redevelopment Agency, and transfer its assets and liabilities to the Hibbing Economic Development Authority, which offers development assistance for new and expansion-minded businesses interested in locating in Hibbing.

By law, redevelopment agencies have no authority to dissolve.

Approved Jan. 31 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee, it was sent to the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

An amendment was successfully proposed that would allow the governing body of any municipality to dissolve a local agency and transfer its assets and liabilities. This would eliminate the need for a new statute to be drafted every time an agency is dissolved.

A companion bill, [SF54](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

## METRO AFFAIRS

### The green bus

Metro Transit, the bus service serving much of the Twin Cities metropolitan area, is trying to make its bus exhaust fumes more environmentally friendly.

“We are the largest user of fuel in the state of Minnesota, so we take environmental issues quite seriously,” Peter Bell,

Metropolitan Council chairman, told the [House Transportation Finance Division](#) Jan. 25. No action was taken.

The system now uses ultra-low sulfur fuel, instead of just low sulfur fuel; since July 2006 it has used 5 percent biodiesel in its buses; and it is testing a fuel that is 20 percent biodiesel.

Currently the system operates three hybrid buses, and Bell said the intent is to purchase 150 more by 2011.

Doing so would likely be more expensive. A 40-foot hybrid bus now has a price tag of about \$500,000, but he expects the cost to decrease with improved technology. The current diesel buses cost about \$315,000.

However, Bell noted that Metro Transit would use 19,682 fewer gallons of diesel fuel over the 12-year lifespan of a hybrid bus. “The cost savings of the diesel doesn’t make up for the \$185,000 difference,” he said. “But who knows what will happen to the price of fuel.”

In addition to running more quietly, Bell said hybrid buses should emit 91 percent less particulate matter, mainly soot, and 85 percent less nitrogen oxide.

Other changes to the current fleet have reduced particulate matter emissions from 85 tons per year in 1995 to a projected 12.8 tons this year and 8 tons by 2011.

If you have Internet access, visit the  
Legislature’s Web page at:  
[www.leg.mn](http://www.leg.mn)

## SAFETY

### Child safety restraints

State law states that 4-year-old Abbie Swanson of Lakeville no longer needs to be in a child passenger restraint system that meets federal standards.

However, a bill sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) would require that Abbie be in such a system until her eighth birthday.

Approved by the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee Jan. 31, [HF105](#) next goes to the House Transportation Finance Division.

Gail Weinholzer, director of public affairs for AAA Minnesota/Iowa, said that 13 Minnesotans between ages 4-10 were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2005, and almost 1,200 were seriously injured.

She said the solution offered in this bill is quite easy to enact.

“We’d like to see state statute reflect best practice of 2007, versus best practice of 1982, which was when this statute was originally enacted,” she said. “Our current statute does a disservice to children ages 4-8.”

Plus, an adult seat belt on a 4-year-old could do more damage than good.

According to the Minnesota Emergency Nurses Association, “An improper fit of an adult safety belt can cause the lap belt to ride up over the stomach and the shoulder belt to cut across the neck, potentially exposing the child to serious abdominal or neck injury.” Additionally, if the shoulder strap portion of the lap/shoulder



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

With the assistance of Dakota County Deputy Sheriff Char Rayl, 4-year-old Abbie Swanson of Lakeville demonstrates to the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee the proper use of a child restraint Jan. 31. Rep. Melissa Hortman, back, is sponsoring a bill that would require passenger restraint for children under age 8 in motor vehicles.

belt is uncomfortable, children will likely place it behind their backs, defeating the safety benefits of the system.

For violating current statute, the driver is assessed a \$50 fine that can be waived if, within 14 days, they produce evidence that a child passenger restraint system has been obtained. The bill requires the fine be waived.

"I don't want this to be a punitive bill. I'd rather it be an educational bill," Hortman said.

Weinholzer said the average car seat costs \$50-\$75, and a booster seat can be had for \$13. Many agencies provide free seats for low-income families.

A companion bill, **SF122**, sponsored by **Sen. Jim Carlson** (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

## TAXES

### Governor signs tax conformity

Signed  
by  
the  
governor

Thousands of Minnesotans will benefit from tax credits for 2006 now that **Gov. Tim Pawlenty** has signed the first bill of the session.

Sponsored by **Rep. Sandy Wollschlager** (DFL-Cannon Falls) and **Sen. Thomas Bakk** (DFL-Cook), the law conforms Minnesota's income tax to federal income tax changes enacted since the 2006 Legislature adjourned.

The changes will increase the tuition expense deduction up to \$4,000 and the teacher classroom expense deduction up to \$250; allow military personnel to count tax-exempt combat pay as earned income for the purpose of qualifying to make tax-deductible contributions to IRAs; and allow people, at least age 70½, to make direct charitable contributions from an IRA to a charity.

The law, most of which is effective Jan. 31, 2007 will affect 2006 income tax returns only.

Quick action was needed because residents, if they haven't done so already, will be preparing 2006 tax returns soon. Those that have filed their income taxes and qualify for these middle-income federal tax credits will have to file an amended tax return.

**HF8\*/SF17/CH1**

### Tax exemption concerns

One part of a bill that mirrors the governor's tax budget proposal was not exactly received warmly Jan. 29 by the House Taxes Committee.

Sponsored by **Rep. Dean Simpson** (R-New York Mills), **HF304** provides budget reserves,

modified property tax and levy provisions, federal tax conformity, military income and pension exclusions and specified sales tax exemptions.

Arguably, the most controversial part of the bill gives Thomson West, a legal information solutions company in Eagan, a sales tax exemption for a possible expansion.

**Rep. Debra Hilstrom** (DFL-Brooklyn Center) asked if it is typical for the state to give a tax exemption to just one company, and wanted to know why this company was chosen.

"Is this the only request (the governor) got?" she asked. "How did he make the decision that this should be in his budget and no one else was?"

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said that as far as he knows, Thomson West was the only company to request this exemption. He added that Minnesota had to become more competitive or risk losing the company to another state. He compared this plan to the Job Opportunity Building Zones program.

Hilstrom said the Mall of America was looking for a sales tax exemption and wanted to know why it wasn't considered. Einess said the Mall of America was looking for a long-term exemption, which is different from Thomson West's short-term request.

**Rep. Joe Mullery** (DFL-Mpls) found it "interesting" that the commissioner was comparing the Thomson West request to JOBZ, which provides tax relief to companies in needy areas and was targeted to manufacturing businesses in Greater Minnesota. He added that the highest unemployment in the state is in north Minneapolis, the next highest is in south Minneapolis, and the third, he believes, is St. Paul.

"The governor's office fought strongly against any kind of a JOBZ, whatsoever, that would help businesses produce jobs in north Minneapolis," Mullery said. "Now we're going to do that for an area of Eagan, Apple Valley, etc., which is not exactly thought of as one of the neediest areas of the state."

A companion bill, **SF293**, sponsored by **Sen. Julianne Ortman** (R-Chanhassen), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

### Property tax hot line

Anyone with an opinion about rising property taxes or, better yet, have a solution to this hot-button issue? Legislators want to hear from you.

The **House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division** has created a comment line and Web site designed to provide an avenue for taxpayers to have a say in how the House addresses rapidly rising property taxes.

"This will allow folks back home to have

input from the kitchen table to the committee table," said **Rep. Paul Marquart** (DFL-Dilworth), the division chairman.

The hot line started on Jan. 29, and by the next morning, 53 e-mails and 21 calls had been tallied.

"I've been encouraged," Marquart said. "It's going to put us in better communication with the public."

At the end of February, the division will pick ideas for inclusion in a citizens' omnibus property tax relief bill. Citizens whose ideas are picked will have the opportunity to testify to the division. Marquart said he has never heard of a citizens' bill being proposed. Through the next few weeks, he will give updates on ideas being generated from the hot line.

"The strength of the work done in the property tax division is going to come from public input," he said.

The hot line will be open the whole session, but Marquart said a property tax report has to be completed by mid-March.

Comments can be accepted at (651) 297-8131, (800) 551-5520 or [www.house.mn/df/ptax/propertytaxproject.html](http://www.house.mn/df/ptax/propertytaxproject.html).

### Performance-based measurements

The House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee was shown a Web-based option for tracking the quality of health care facilities Jan. 30.

A performance measurement software currently being used in more than 200 sites in 15 states was described to members by Paul Rengstorf, president of cPMT, Inc. The Minnesota corporation created a design and measurement tool to monitor the progress of various aspects of operating a health care facility, such as employee turnover, customer satisfaction and internal operating efficiencies.

**Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.** (DFL-Winona), the committee chairman, said the presentation came about because of a **2006 gubernatorial initiative**, in which **Gov. Tim Pawlenty** called for investing in the state's mental health infrastructure.

### Where to find information House Public Information Services

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

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

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



## Saving state dollars

Consolidating services is part of “Drive to Excellence”

By PATTY OSTBERG

Instead of trekking out in below zero weather to get license tabs for a car that might start on a brisk morning, Minnesotans can now sit in their pajamas at home and perform the task online.

This is precisely the type of government service the governor’s “Drive to Excellence” campaign intends to provide constituents.

The campaign will create speedy delivery of government services, Department of Administration Commissioner Dana Badgerow told the House State Government Finance Division Jan. 25.

### Restructure and retool

In conjunction with more demand, a demographic issue is facing the state government’s workforce. By 2010, one in four state employees is scheduled to be eligible to retire; by 2015 the number is projected to be 50 percent, she said.

Now is the perfect opportunity to restructure and retool the way we serve constituents so that it can be more automated and done with more productivity, she said. “We have to stop replicating all of these functions agency by agency” and doing it differently and inefficiently in most departments, she said.

The [Office of Enterprise Technology](#), one of the initial campaign initiatives, is to create technology efficiencies among agencies. The office is also scheduled to oversee the creation of an information security program for which the governor budgeted \$17 million for in his 2008-09 biennial recommendations.

Essentially the technology security would allow people to rest more easily when paying online, knowing their personal payment information would be tightly secured.

Chief Information Officer Gopal Khanna said other future changes include more e-services by governmental agencies, consolidating information technology programs and modernizing business applications.

An additional \$13 million in the governor’s budget would be used to streamline, upgrade



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

**Gopal Khanna, state chief information officer, gives an overview of the Office of Enterprise Technology to the House State Government Finance Division Jan. 25.**

and manage state technology to jump-start the consolidation of Internet technology resources.

### Licensing efficiency

One early success of the program was the Dec. 15 debut of the “[License Minnesota](#)” Web site, where constituents can find licensing information by activity, agency or key word search. The collaboration includes information for 673 license types for businesses, professional, vehicle and recreational purposes administered by more than 40 state agencies.

According to the site, “The portal eliminates the need for citizens, professionals and business operators to know — or at least make an educated guess about — which state agency administers what license. Users can view information, and in many cases, connect directly to Web-based license applications.”

The next step in the “excellence” campaign is

to make purchasing a license available online.

Another initiative was [consolidating state construction codes](#) and licensing to create a consistent response from state government. Before the reorganization, the construction industry was regulated by six different state agencies.

The Construction Codes and Licensing Division consolidated five areas: Building Codes and Standards Division of the Department of Administration, Plumbing and Engineering unit of the Department of Health, Board of Electricity, Residential Contractors’ Licensing unit of the Department of Commerce, and Boiler and High-pressure Piping of the Department of Labor and Industry.

Through strategic sourcing or buying commodities as a state, entities such as K-12 and higher education have been using a new system to purchase computer hardware, saving upward of 44 percent, Badgerow said.

State agencies now work cooperatively on contracts and source high volume items collectively, saving the state money.

For example, Badgerow said when she came to state government she was given a choice of 48 options for a cell phone. Now most state employees have only one choice, which has resulted in more than \$1 million in savings, she said. Similar programs now include desktop computers, laptops, monitors and office chairs.

Another future initiative funded by \$6.7 million in the governor’s budget is to create a system to track state building inventory, Badgerow said. The state owns more than 5,000 buildings and has more than 800 commercial leases, but there is no single database with information on the status, condition or occupancy of the buildings.

Because 22 “custodial” agencies manage the thousands of buildings, if an agency is looking for space in a specific area, it would be difficult to find unused state-owned space already paid for, Badgerow said. This database would create a centralized location to help prioritize funding asset preservation and track the state’s real property.

Other funding projects include: a grants management office to better track the \$1 billion in grant money now appropriated to more than 7,000 grantees; a new accounting and procurement system; and an informational system to track the state’s fleet of more than 8,000 vehicles. 🚗

# Rap, verse and the spoken word

State needs a poet 'free to write rhyming lines'

By CRAIG GREEN

The language of bills presented in the House isn't poetic. By design, bills include definitions, legal terms, statute citations and subdivisions — all to support the document's main points.

But HF224 is different.

Sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), the bill proposes the creation of the position of state poet laureate and the language of the bill reflects its intent — it is written in verse. (Kahn did not write the poem; that credit goes to the nonpartisan House Research Department staff.) The bill has been referred to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A companion bill, SF432, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble, awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

One might think it logical, even expected, for this state to have a poet laureate. Minnesota is known for its support of the arts, and 40 other states have an official position of poet laureate or state writer. Two Minnesota cities, Duluth and St. Paul, have their own, and various counties and cities throughout the country are doing the same.

The first poet laureate of Minnesota was Margaret Ball Dickson, given her title by the Poet Laureate League in 1934. Shortly after her appointment, Gov. Floyd B. Olson sent a letter to Dickson offering his congratulations on her "designation" as poet laureate, but there was never an official appointment.

In 1974, there was an election for poet laureate, led by columnist Abe Altowitz of the *Minnesota Star*. When the votes were tallied, Laurene Tibbetts was named poet laureate, though again, not officially recognized. That same year, there was a bill proposed to create an official position, but it was held up in committee and never moved forward.

During the last biennium, the House and Senate overwhelmingly passed a bill — this version was not in verse — to establish the position of poet laureate, but it failed to become law.

"While respectful and appreciative of

the arts, I do not believe Minnesota needs an official state poet laureate," wrote Gov. Tim Pawlenty, in a letter explaining his veto. "Even though we have a state 'folklorist,' I also have some concern this will lead to calls for other similar positions. We could see requests for a state mime, interpretative dancer, or potter."

Kahn notes that around the time of Pawlenty's veto, Ted Kossler, at that time the U.S. Poet Laureate, spoke to a sold-out audience in Minneapolis. "There was a huge turnout for a poetry reading," said Kahn. "People wanted to hear what he had to say."

When asked why she's bringing this issue up again, Kahn said she believes the time is right.

"Poetry is much more prominent now with kids than when I was a kid, and we just memorized 'The Ride of Paul Revere,'" Kahn said. The popularity of spoken word contests and rap poetry is bringing poetry to an entirely new audience.

Poetry is also having an impact on today's youth, and it can open doors to reading and furthering education, said Kahn. When children are involved with poetry, "you can see a difference. There is a connection."

Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), co-sponsor of HF224 and himself a published author, agrees that exposing more people to culture is a good thing to do. "I think that identifying someone as a poet laureate promotes culture," Urdahl said. "It's the right thing to do."

Kahn, whose favorite poem is "Under Milk

This Document can be made available in alternative formats upon request

State of Minnesota

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION

January 18, 2007  
Authored by Kahn, Urdahl, Helly, Jarrow and Haurman  
The bill was read for the first time, and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections

**HOUSE FILE NO. 224**

1.1 A bill for an act

1.2 relating to the state; appointing a poet laureate; appropriating gift or grant money

1.3 received; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 138.

1.4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:**

1.5 **Section 1. [138.99] POET LAUREATE.**

1.6 Subdivision 1. Appointment.

1.7 The Gov' shall appoint a state poet laureate,

1.8 Who shall serve for a four-year term.

1.9 Because this appointment will always be great,

1.10 There's no need for the Senate to confirm.

1.11 In appointing a poet for the public good,

1.12 And to ensure there's no unjust omission,

1.13 The governor shall consider, if he would

1.14 Thoughts of the Humanities Commission.

1.15 Subd. 2. Removal.

1.16 The poet will be free to write rhyming lines,

1.17 With removal only for cause,

1.18 But we trust that the bard will promptly resign,

1.19 If the verse reads as badly as laws.

1.20 Subd. 3. Compensation.

1.21 "Would be fair to provide some just recompense

1.22 As reward for the poet's tribulations,

1.23 But because at this time we haven't the cents

1.24 We're afraid there is no compensation.

1.25 But we ask as the poet travels the state,

1.26 And the people their ears they lend,

2.1 That our learned Commission take the position

2.2 To provide the poor poet a stipend.

2.3 Subd. 4. Gifts and grants.


2.4 To provide the support that needs to come

2.5 To support our new laureate,

2.6 Gifts and grants received of a generous sum,

2.7 We hereby appropriate.

Wood," by Dylan Thomas, remembers a speech given by John F. Kennedy, Jr. in honor of the poet Robert Frost. Kennedy said: "When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses, for art establishes the basic human truths which must serve as the touchstones of judgment."

Kahn points out that the governor is currently emphasizing technology. But without poetry, technology could have an unwanted effect, said Kahn. "Technology should be moderated by poetry." 



# Less of a learning curve

## Anderson goes from staff member to House member

By CRAIG GREEN

For most freshmen representatives, there is a period of adjustment when they begin working at the State Office Building. They



Rep. Sarah Anderson

have new offices and staff, rules of protocol to learn for drafting legislation and etiquette for floor sessions. Not so for Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth), a 10-year veteran of working across the street from the Capitol.

Anderson worked as a legislative assistant, a committee administrator, was an executive assistant to former House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon) for six years, and she oversaw many legislative assistants.

While growing up, it was routine for Anderson and her family to discuss politics. These early conversations motivated her to

learn more about the political process and get involved. This led her to the University of Minnesota-Duluth, where she majored in political science and sociology, and met her husband, Paul. Once out of college, she worked in the private sector, before coming to work at the House.

Anderson said she represents “a unique district. We’re a growing community with young families and a growing diverse population.”

This growth means transportation is a “huge issue” for her district.

Four heavily traveled roadways—Highways 55 and 169, and Interstates 394 and 494—either go through or border her district, causing major traffic congestion. Anderson wants to work together to find a way to improve this situation, and find ways to improve the transportation system for Minnesota as a whole. “I am passionate about working in a bipartisan manner with other legislators to

DISTRICT 43A
2002 population: 36,957
Largest city: Plymouth
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Property taxes, education and transportation

get the job done,” said Anderson.

Other topics of concern include property tax relief and education.

Anderson will directly address these issues on the committees she serves, including the House Commerce and Labor Committee, the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee, and the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division.

A veteran observer of the process, Anderson is excited about her new role. “I’m the eternal optimist. I’m looking forward to having the opportunity to sit down in the committee process and work through these ideas, and figure out what’s the best solution for the citizens of Minnesota. That’s exciting to me.”

# Education still top priority

## Former teacher Benson wants to see improvements

By SONJA HEGMAN

Rep. John Benson’s (DFL-Minnetonka) political roots run deep.



Rep. John Benson

His ancestors, former Republicans, were active participants in the Farmer-Labor movement. His uncle traveled with former President Theodore Roosevelt to inspect the Panama Canal. His parents had many political discussions at the dinner table when Benson was growing up. And Benson himself had several conversations with Hubert Humphrey.

Originally from Montana, Benson’s family saw good times and bad. His father was a big poker player and, family rumor has it, this kept the family afloat. A lover of card games as well, Benson enjoys the game bridge because

“you psych out your opponent and it helps stave off Alzheimer’s disease.”

A retired high school teacher, Benson taught language arts, social studies and economics during his 34-year career in Edina. He was recruited for that teaching position, and considers his election to the House as the first job interview he has ever had.

Since his retirement in 1999, he has volunteered many hours to campaigns. When freezes and cutbacks on education funding occurred in 2003, Benson became frustrated with the Legislature.

“I was unable to shut up,” he said. “That’s why I ran.”

Benson won the seat held for nine terms by a Republican, Ron Abrams, who was appointed to a judgeship last year.

Education is a top concern in Benson’s district. The Hopkins School District is in a statutory operating debt, meaning it has spent more money than it has and does not have a

DISTRICT 43B
2002 population: 36,921
Largest city: Plymouth
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Education, property tax relief and health care

reserve budget, a violation of state law, he said. A neighborhood school was closed because of this as a way to offset some of the district’s costs. Benson does not want other schools to close in his district, he said, and wants to see a change in the way education is funded.

“I’m interested in the education of every kid in the state,” Benson said. “Our kids are the future. We need to invest in them.”

Benson is very optimistic about his first session, and said people in both caucuses can see “we need to move” on various issues. He’s also interested to see what will be decided with the budget surplus.

“It’s tough to make a buck, and we shouldn’t just spend because we have it,” he said.

# Taking a new direction

## Faust hopes to get government working

By SONJA HEGMAN

**Rep. Tim Faust** (DFL-Mora) wants to move Minnesota in the right direction.



**Rep. Tim Faust**

The freshman has already co-sponsored legislation to get the state's government "working again." This is also the reason he ran for office.

He also signed onto the DFL's so-called "Focus on Basics" agenda, which include bills that would extend health care coverage to every Minnesota child; make voluntary full-day every day kindergarten available in each school district; increase the basic education funding formula by 3 percent in both 2008 and 2009; prevent government shutdown; and provide \$20 million in tax relief to Minnesota taxpayers.

With no job growth in his district "for a long time," Faust said job creation is probably the No. 1 issue in his district.

"We're competing in the global job market," he said. "When my kids get out of college they won't be competing with the kid from South Dakota. They'll be competing with the kid from South Korea."

For this reason, Faust, who beat two-term incumbent Judy Soderstrom, wants to see equity in school funding so all students get the knowledge they need.

"There's no excuse not to have equity in school funding," he said. "It would be easier to throw our model away and start over, than try to fix it." He has co-sponsored a bill that ensures state education funding so districts can budget more efficiently.

Health care costs are also an issue for his constituents. For example, one family's per

## DISTRICT 8B

2002 population: 36,998

Largest city: Mora

Counties: Isanti, Kanabec and Pine

Top concerns: Job growth, the economy and education funding

paycheck cost for health insurance jumped from \$100 to \$400. These costs, in addition to rising property taxes, have hurt his district tremendously, he said.

"Some people who have lived in their homes for years have been forced to move to nursing homes because they can't afford their property taxes," Faust said. "It's crazy to force people out of their homes. We have to do everything we can to help them stay in their homes."

In addition to serving as vice chairman of the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee, he serves on the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs, and K-12 finance divisions.

# Schools advocate

## Laine seeks to address education, property taxes in year one

By CRAIG GREEN

**Rep. Carolyn Laine** (DFL-Columbia Heights) believes in family and the power of education.



**Rep. Carolyn Laine**

Laine, who holds degrees in education and psychology, believes in the importance of early childhood education. "I've studied how the brain develops, and I know that the early years are the foundation of a child's education," she said.

She believes that with adequate resources and attention, the educational development of

young people in Minnesota can be addressed more effectively. "If [a child] has stress in their life, they live in poverty, have inadequate housing and no health care, their development is affected."

Laine, who serves on the Columbia Heights Charter Commission, decided to run for office after former Rep. Barbara Goodwin announced that she would not seek another term. With encouragement and support from her five children — Jennifer, Jesse, Teresa, Sarah and Anniki — she entered the race.

The level of property taxes her constituents are asked to pay is something she wants to address. "There needs to be an equitable form of taxation. We encourage people to buy homes, and then we tax them at unreasonable rates."

Laine will have a direct voice on these issues, serving on the House E-12 Education Committee, the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division, the House

## DISTRICT 50A

2002 population: 36,916

Largest city: Fridley

Counties: Anoka and Ramsey

Top concerns: Education, property taxes and health care

Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division and the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division. She also serves on the Minnesota Heritage Finance Division.

Sitting in her new office, decorated with the help of one of her daughters, Laine knows she has an opportunity to speak and stand up for many others.

"I grew up on the Iron Range, and I'm focused on supporting working families and their struggles. There are businesses and corporations that need to remember that they have human beings with families working for them. You don't stand on the back of anyone and pretend they're not there."



## Monday, January 29

### HF367-Johnson (DFL)

#### Public Safety & Civil Justice

Ramsey County; corrections provisions modified.

### HF368-Peterson, A. (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Statewide hospitality fee eliminated and money appropriated.

### HF369-Peterson, A. (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Second inspection fee and the statewide hospitality fee for elementary and secondary schools eliminated.

### HF370-Mahoney (DFL)

#### Finance

Higher education asset preservation and replacement established and money appropriated.

### HF371-Slocum (DFL)

#### Finance

Richfield; capital improvements for athletic fields construction provided.

### HF372-Slocum (DFL)

#### Finance

Richfield; capital improvements for a new arterial street construction provided.

### HF373-Johnson (DFL)

#### Commerce & Labor

St. Paul; intoxicating liquor license authorized.

### HF374-Hansen (DFL)

#### Finance

Board of Water and Soil Resources general services grants provided.

### HF375-Ruud (DFL)

#### Environment & Natural Resources

Global Warming Mitigation Act enacted.

### HF376-Paulsen (R)

#### Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State Web site with a searchable database on state contracts and grants funding required.

### HF377-Thao (DFL)

#### Finance

Lifetrack Resources immigrant and refugee collaborative programs grant funding provided.

### HF378-Johnson (DFL)

#### Finance

St. Paul National Great River Park improvements funding provided.

### HF379-Hausman (DFL)

#### Finance

St. Paul Union Depot improvements funding provided.

### HF380-Hausman (DFL)

#### Finance

High-speed rail line between St. Paul and Chicago state's funding share provided.

### HF381-Hausman (DFL)

#### Finance

Central Corridor transitway between St. Paul and Minneapolis funding provided.

### HF382-Atkins (DFL)

#### Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State employee political activities limitations restricted.

### HF383-Slawik (DFL)

#### Finance

Ramsey County; mothers first program for alcohol and drug use early intervention funding provided.

### HF384-Erickson (R)

#### Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State grants executive agency management coordination by the commissioner of administration provided.

### HF385-Nornes (R)

#### Finance

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities tuition freeze provided, job training programs consolidated, on-line courses offerings increased.

### HF386-Kalin (DFL)

#### Finance

St. Paul to Hinckley Rush Line Corridor funding provided.

### HF387-Clark (DFL)

#### Commerce & Labor

Predatory lending practices regulated and remedies and criminal penalties provided.

### HF388-Cornish (R)

#### Finance

Waseca; Minnesota Agricultural Interpretive Center operations provided.

### HF389-Hamilton (R)

#### Finance

Jackson County Central School District fund transfer authorized.

### HF390-Rukavina (DFL)

#### Taxes

Disabled veteran or surviving spouse homestead property tax exemption provided.

### HF391-Rukavina (DFL)

#### Commerce & Labor

Employee invention agreements regulated.

### HF392-Erickson (R)

#### Finance

Special license plates; pink ribbon breast cancer awareness plate emblems issued.

### HF393-Scalze (DFL)

#### Finance

Geothermal heat pump uses study funded by the Public Utilities Commission.

### HF394-DeLaForest (R)

#### Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

State grant moratorium imposed until effective management and improved accountability is established.

### HF395-Dominguez (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Minnesota Family Investment Program transitional standard increased.

### HF396-Dominguez (DFL)

#### E-12 Education

School district extended time revenue increased.

### HF397-Murphy, M. (DFL)

#### Finance

Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center arena money appropriated.

### HF398-Huntley (DFL)

#### Finance

Tuition and fees paid by Wisconsin residents attending the University of Minnesota regulated.

### HF399-Rukavina (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Long-Term Care Patient Access to Pharmaceuticals Act established and penalties provided.

### HF400-Hosch (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Nursing facilities for the provision of additional specialized services contracts allowed, reimbursement for short-stay residents modified, operating payment rates increased, case mix indices implemented and rate adjustments provided.

### HF401-Thissen (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Nursing facility moratorium exception proposals criteria provided, allowable equipment interest limit increased, replacement-cost-new per bed limit increased, nursing facility property costs reimbursement provided and funds authorized.

### HF402-Hansen (DFL)

#### Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Residential microbial pesticide applicator licensure study required.

### HF403-Peterson, S. (DFL)

#### Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Campaign material to constitutional requirements disclaimer requirements conformed.

### HF404-Hilty (DFL)

#### Commerce & Labor

Incorporation of socially responsible for-profit business corporations provided.

### HF405-Hilty (DFL)

#### Finance

Culkin rest area on Interstate 35 reopened.

### HF406-Welti (DFL)

#### Taxes

Small city definition modified.

### HF407-Dean (R)

#### Finance

St. Croix River in Stillwater flood control levee project provided.

### HF408-Rukavina (DFL)

#### Health & Human Services

Independent living skills services provided by certain additional qualified people, and Centers for Independent Living regulated.

### HF409-Morrow (DFL)

#### Finance

Library telecommunications aid and telecommunications/Internet access equity provided.

### HF410-Tillberry (DFL)

#### Finance

Independent School District No. 14, Fridley, levy authorized.

### HF411-Dittrich (DFL)

#### E-12 Education

Financial literacy curriculum incorporated into high school graduation standards economic course requirements.

### HF412-Peterson, S. (DFL)

#### E-12 Education

Professional teaching standards grant program established.

### HF413-Lillie (DFL)

#### Commerce & Labor

Outdoor sport equipment dealers franchise agreements with manufacturers regulated, title requirements imposed.

**HF414-Liebling (DFL)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Crime victims emergency needs fund grants authorized.

**HF415-Poppe (DFL)**  
**Environment & Natural Resources**  
Noise standards exemptions modified.

**HF416-Brynaert (DFL)**  
**Health & Human Services**  
Mental health certified peer specialist program established.

**HF417-Bigham (DFL)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Elementary and middle school years education International Baccalaureate pilot program established.

**HF418-Bigham (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Red Rock Corridor transitway funding provided.

**HF419-Sailer (DFL)**  
**Environment & Natural Resources**  
Off-highway vehicle damage account modified.

**HF420-Ward (DFL)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Health and physical education course requirements provided, approved local school wellness policies posted on department Web site, grant program established and rulemaking authorized.

**HF421-Anderson, B. (R)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Drug paraphernalia crime modified to address mental state requirements, sales of paraphernalia, and consolidate into single statutory section; possession of items associated with controlled substances prohibited and penalties imposed.

**HF422-Seifert (R)**  
**Environment & Natural Resources**  
Redwood River designated as a canoe and boating route.

**HF423-Mullery (DFL)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Juvenile and criminal justice systems, and delinquent and criminal conduct consequences taught to middle school students.

**HF424-Mullery (DFL)**  
**Commerce & Labor**  
Auto insurance discrimination prohibited based on geographic location within the metropolitan area.

**HF425-Paymar (DFL)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Motor vehicle theft victims emergency grants authorized.

**HF426-Hamilton (R)**  
**Finance**  
Workforce development fund for extended employment services for persons with severe disabilities base appropriation redefined.

**HF427-Hamilton (R)**  
**Health & Human Services**  
Medical assistance operating payment rates for low-payment rate nursing facilities adjusted and money appropriated.

**HF428-Kahn (DFL)**  
**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**  
Voting age lowered to 16 for school district elections and constitutional amendment proposed.

**HF429-Erickson (R)**  
**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**  
Legislative Coordinating Commission required to study issues relating to men.

**HF430-Erickson (R)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Teacher training provided for qualified professionals.

**HF431-Erhardt (R)**  
**Taxes**  
Transit pass income tax credit extended to nonprofit organizations.

**HF432-Paymar (DFL)**  
**Taxes**  
Limited market value law extended for two years.

**HF433-Cornish (R)**  
**Taxes**  
Alternative fuel vehicle federal taxable income subtraction provided.

**HF434-Cornish (R)**  
**Taxes**  
Hydrogen used to power engines or fuel cells exempted from the sales tax.

**HF435-Cornish (R)**  
**Taxes**  
Alternative fuel vehicle conversion income tax credit provided.

**HF436-Hilty (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 adopted establishing energy policy goals and providing for renewable energy obligations.

**HF437-Bunn (DFL)**  
**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**  
Pan flashing required under all exterior windows and doors.

**HF438-Ozment (R)**  
**Environment & Natural Resources**  
Heritage enhancement fund and council established, sales tax increased and funds dedicated, arts and cultural resources funding provided, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

**HF439-Greiling (DFL)**  
**Commerce & Labor**  
Lake property sellers required to disclose and provide to buyers known existing land surveys.

**HF440-Madore (DFL)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Adults with disabilities program funding increased.

**HF441-Mullery (DFL)**  
**Environment & Natural Resources**  
State lottery net proceeds and in-lieu tax distribution modified.

**HF442-Howes (R)**  
**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**  
Emily sales tax authorized and fund use specified.

**HF443-Peterson, S. (DFL)**  
**E-12 Education**  
Alternative school year calendar program grants provided.

**HF444-Johnson (DFL)**  
**Health & Human Services**  
Senior nutrition funding restored, grants provided.

**HF445-Erickson (R)**  
**Finance**  
School district debt service levies tax base modified.

**HF446-Kahn (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Outdoor light pollution restricted.

**HF447-Dill (DFL)**  
**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**  
Crane Lake certificates of indebtedness authorized.

**HF448-Mullery (DFL)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Auto insurance verification mailing program repealed.

**HF449-Murphy, M. (DFL)**  
**Taxes**  
Property tax refund program extended to residents of certain nursing homes.

**HF450-Peterson, A. (DFL)**  
**Health & Human Services**  
Big Stone County nursing facility planned closure rate adjustment authorized.

**HF451-Jaros (DFL)**  
**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**  
Honor guard member reimbursement provided for National Guard funerals.

**HF452-Mahoney (DFL)**  
**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**  
Technology and commercialization unit established in the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

**HF453-Juhnke (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Renewable energy requirements imposed, large energy facilities certificates of need regulated, integrated resource planning requirements and transmission planning processes regulated and transmission lines taxation provided.

**HF454-Fritz (DFL)**  
**Taxes**  
Faribault tax increment financing expenditures authorized.

**HF455-Murphy, M. (DFL)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Public defense provisions of law updated and clarified, defendant representation co-payments eliminated and chief public defender appointment provided.

**HF456-Rukavina (DFL)**  
**Commerce & Labor**  
Minimum wage increased and indexed, training wage eliminated and new employee notice required.

**HF457-Gardner (DFL)**  
**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Scrap metal dealer purchase record-keeping expanded relating to law enforcement.

**HF458-Cornish (R)**  
**Finance**  
Peace Officer Standards and Training Board appropriation increased.

**HF459-Johnson (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Ramsey County; summer employment for at-risk youth funding provided.

**HF460-Lesch (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Ramsey County All Children Excel (ACE) program funding provided.

**HF461-Solberg (DFL)**  
**Finance**  
Grand Rapids Children's Discovery Museum funding provided.



**HF462-Murphy, E. (DFL)****Finance**

Deaf and hearing loss; support services funding provided to families with children who are deaf or have a hearing loss.

**HF463-Murphy, E. (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare small employer buy-in option created.

**HF464-Sertich (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

School employee statewide health insurance plan established.

**HF465-Kranz (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent nonprofit firefighting corporations included in joint exercise of powers agreements.

**HF466-Dittrich (DFL)****Taxes**

Property tax relief provided; and equity, transition and referendum equalization levies increased and indexed.

**HF467-Dittrich (DFL)****Taxes**

Property tax relief provided; and debt service equalization revenue, health and safety, deferred maintenance, and operating capital levies increased and indexed.

## Thursday, February 1

**HF468-Hilty (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

United States Senate vacancy election procedures specified.

**HF469-Sviggum (R)****Taxes**

Property tax class 4c expanded to include certain nonprofit community service oriented organizations.

**HF470-Brod (R)****Health & Human Services**

Vaccines; patient notification required when a vaccine contains more than a trace amount of mercury.

**HF471-Morrow (DFL)****Finance**

Lake Titlow watershed improvements funding provided.

**HF472-Morrow (DFL)****Finance**

Renewable energy production incentives eligibility period extended.

**HF473-Erickson (R)****E-12 Education**

Child abuse; agency jurisdiction for investigations clarified relating to schools and school-age care programs, and child abuse offender information repository plan development required.

**HF474-Brod (R)****Health & Human Services**

Health care system redesign statewide plan development provided.

**HF475-Loeffler (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Adult dependents private health care coverage expanded by including those not enrolled as full-time students.

**HF476-Lesch (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sex offender residence upon release from confinement location requirements modified.

**HF477-Tillberry (DFL)****Taxes**

Parent volunteering at child's school or child care income tax credit provided.

**HF478-Walker (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Universal health care system provided, preventive care and early intervention focus required, cost reductions and comprehensive benefits provided, plan implementation required by 2010 and constitutional amendment proposed.

**HF479-Walker (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Universal health care system provided, preventive care and early intervention focus required, cost reductions and comprehensive benefits provided and plan implementation by 2010 required.

**HF480-Ruud (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Minnesota Family Investment Program children's mental health pilot project authorized and money appropriated.

**HF481-Hosch (DFL)****E-12 Education**

School districts authorized to grant required course credits to students who satisfactorily complete science, math or arts courses as part of career and technical education programs.

**HF482-Hortman (DFL)****E-12 Education**

School year length increased and school start before Labor Day prohibition repealed.

**HF483-Slawik (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota False Claims Act established.

**HF484-Koenen (DFL)****Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Beginning farmer program administered by the Rural Finance Authority provisions modified and income tax credits provided to beginning farmers for participating in farm management programs.

**HF485-Magnus (R)****Finance**

Floodplain management funding provided.

**HF486-Finstad (R)****Taxes**

Homestead classification extended to certain property used for non-homestead purposes.

**HF487-Finstad (R)****Finance**

Independent School District No. 2884, Red Rock Central, fund transfer authorized.

**HF488-Finstad (R)****Finance**

Independent School District No. 81, Comfrey, fund transfer authorized.

**HF489-Hilstrom (DFL)****E-12 Education**

Staff development funding authorized for school districts with schools not making adequate yearly progress.

**HF490-Hilstrom (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Independent state planning office reestablished.

**HF491-Erhardt (R)****Health & Human Services**

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

**HF492-Haws (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Counties provided funding for housing short-term felony offenders and short-term offender advisory task force created.

**HF493-Mariani (DFL)****Finance**

Statewide science, technology, engineering and math incentive funding provided.

**HF494-Dill (DFL)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources dedicated sales tax funding provided, great outdoors and clean water fund established, Great Outdoors Council created, bonds issued and constitutional amendment proposed.

**HF495-Rukavina (DFL)****Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

St. Louis County variances required.

**HF496-Lenczewski (DFL)****Taxes**

Tax policy and administrative provisions modified.

**HF497-Urdahl (R)****Finance**

Rural Finance Authority loan funding provided.

**HF498-Cornish (R)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Self-defense; use of force in defense of home and person laws clarified, self-defense and defense of home laws extended and codified, and common law duty to retreat eliminated.

**HF499-Magnus (R)****Health & Human Services**

Chemical use assessments modified and duties imposed on the commissioner of human services related to chemical health.

**HF500-Rukavina (DFL)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Disabled hunters permit provisions extended to include chronic disabilities.

**HF501-Thissen (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Radiation therapy facility construction limitations expiration date eliminated.

**HF502-Beard (R)****Finance**

Scott County regional public safety training facility funding provided.

**HF503-Hilstrom (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Establishing penalties for sexual solicitation of children through the Internet.

**HF504-Hilstrom (DFL)****E-12 Education**

Bullying and intimidation policies in schools required to address electronic and Internet activity.

**HF505-Hilstrom (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Harassment; restraining orders authorized against Internet providers or other computer systems publishing harassing information.

**HF506-Olin (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Domestic abuse no contact order repeat violator felony penalty imposed, and qualified domestic violence-related offenses defined.

**HF507-Tingelstad (R)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Zero discharge grants provided to municipalities for wastewater treatment facilities.

**HF508-Tingelstad (R)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Zero discharge requirements provided for wastewater treatment grants and loans to municipalities.

**HF509-Davnie (DFL)****Commerce & Labor**

Chromated copper arsenate-treated lumber removal required from schools, parks and child care facilities.

**HF510-Erickson (R)****E-12 Education**

School start prior to Labor Day prohibition repealed.

**HF511-Hilstrom (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State employee political activities limitations restricted.

**HF512-Atkins (DFL)****Commerce & Labor**

Gift certificate and gift card expiration dates and service fees prohibited.

**HF513-Lenczewski (DFL)****Finance**

Bloomington; Old Cedar Avenue bridge removal and replacement funding provided.

**HF514-Thissen (DFL)****Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Attorney fee awards factors provided.

**HF515-Sviggum (R)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Legislators prohibited from lobbying for one year after leaving office.

**HF516-Cornish (R)****Finance**

Blue Earth County; Rapidan Dam study provided.

**HF517-Nelson (DFL)****Taxes**

Tax information reporting requirements expanded.

**HF518-Seifert (R)****Health & Human Services**

Licensed nursing home beds surcharge reduced.

**HF519-Seifert (R)****Finance**

Minnesota Inventors Congress funding provided.

**HF520-Seifert (R)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota River Trail loop extension provided.

**HF521-Heidgerken (R)****Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Day paid day off provided to veterans employed by school districts, Veterans Day educational instruction required and private employers encouraged to grant paid holiday to veterans.

**HF522-Welti (DFL)****Environment & Natural Resources**

Glass containers prohibited on public beaches and watercraft, and proper disposal required of waste carried on state waters.

**HF523-Lenczewski (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

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

**HF524-Peterson, N. (R)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Campaign finance disclosure requirements modified, independent expenditures by political party units limited, electioneering communications regulated and work group established.

**HF525-Murphy, E. (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Public health program applicant's employer disclosure required.

**HF526-Benson (DFL)****E-12 Education**

School district operating cost differential study required.

**HF527-Davnie (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Veterans homes previous asset preservation appropriation use expanded to include repair and betterment at the homes.

**HF528-Kalin (DFL)****Transportation Finance Division**

Impounded vehicle sales authorized after voluntary transfer, notice and right to reclaim contents of vehicle provided, and liability of impound lot operator established.

**HF529-Thao (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Amino-based acid elemental formula health insurance coverage required.

**HF530-Ruud (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Human papilloma virus vaccination of female children required and educational materials developed.

**HF531-Beard (R)****Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Scott County Library Board provided as an advisory to the county board.

**HF532-Winkler (DFL)****Commerce & Labor**

Military personnel utility and other contracts regulated and cancellations authorized.

**HF533-Lieder (DFL)****Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Veterans tuition and fee assistance and reimbursement provided for military veterans and their surviving spouses and children at public colleges and universities.

**HF534-Lieder (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Appropriations continued in effect until eliminated or amended by the Legislature.

**HF535-Hamilton (R)****Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Agricultural-based bioscience training and testing center funding provided.

**HF536-Loeffler (DFL)****Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Energy efficient new commercial property assessed market value reduction provided.

**HF537-Clark (DFL)****Finance**

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act modified.

**HF538-Peterson, A. (DFL)****Finance**

Minnesota Conservation Corps funding provided.

**HF539-Juhnke (DFL)****Transportation Finance Division**

Trunk Highway Route No. 145 technical correction provided and Legislative Route No. 262 removed.

**HF540-Erickson (R)****Transportation Finance Division**

School bus driver physical exam requirements satisfied by Federal Aviation Administration medical certificates.

**HF541-Hilstrom (DFL)****Commerce & Labor**

Identity theft crime definition expanded to include posing as another person for purposes of harassing or defaming.

**HF542-Buesgens (R)****Rules & Legislative Administration**

Legislator salary established and per diem payments eliminated.

**HF543-Swails (DFL)****Finance**

Gifted and talented programming funding increased and school districts required to identify gifted and talented students.

**HF544-Moe (DFL)****Environment & Natural Resources**

State parks and trails funding provided.

**HF545-Paymar (DFL)****Finance**

Board of Public Defense funding provided for transcripts.

**HF546-Hornstein (DFL)****Finance**

State employee cost comparison required before entering into transportation privatization contracts, 10 percent savings requirement specified and annual report required.

**HF547-Wardlow (R)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teacher's retirement association rule of 90 benefits extended to coordinated members.

**HF548-Simon (DFL)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State agencies required to certify that no state employees are on recall lists and are able to perform specified services before seeking approval of certain contracts.

**HF549-Davnie (DFL)****E-12 Education**

Charter school qualifying special education costs funding provided.

**HF550-Seifert (R)****Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Post-secondary courses offered in secondary schools requirements clarified.

**HF551-Wollschlager (DFL)****Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Tax deduction for out-of-state active military duty clarified.

**HF552-Buesgens (R)****Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Political subdivisions authorized to establish accounts to pay for post-employment benefits owed to officers and employees.



**HF553-Hilty (DFL)**

**Energy Finance & Policy Division**  
Renewable energy economic development strategy required.

**HF554-Nelson (DFL)**

**Commerce & Labor**  
Employee Free Choice Act support memorialized by resolution to Congress.

**HF555-Bly (DFL)**

**Finance**  
Community education youth service program funding increased.

**HF556-Beard (R)**

**Transportation Finance Division**  
Airport safety zones transfers of real property disclosure requirements clarified.

**HF557-Morgan (DFL)**

**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**  
Metropolitan Airports Commission mayoral memberships added.

**HF558-Peterson, A. (DFL)**

**Finance**  
School district sharing of superintendent's incentive created.

**HF559-Nelson (DFL)**

**Finance**  
Trunk Highway 169, Hennepin County State-Aid Highway and 85th Avenue North intersection interchange construction authorized.

**HF560-Hortman (DFL)**

**Finance**  
Highway 610 trunk highway finance completion authorized.

**HF561-Thissen (DFL)**

**Public Safety & Civil Justice**  
Joint and several liability in certain civil actions allocated.

**HF562-Lieder (DFL)**

**Finance**  
Town road sign replacement program implemented.

**HF563-Sailer (DFL)**

**Environment & Natural Resources**  
Collection, transportation and recycling of video display devices and civil penalties provided.

**HF564-Erickson (R)**

**Commerce & Labor**  
Cable and satellite television customer choice provided.

**HF565-Kalin (DFL)**

**Finance**  
Trunk Highway 95 bridge construction authorized and state trunk highway bonds issued.

**HF566-Garofalo (R)**

**Finance**  
Dakota County; Highway 3 trunk highway bonds issued.

**HF567-Smith (R)**

**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**  
Employee political activities outside the workplace restrictions forbidden.

**HF568-Heidgerken (R)**

**Taxes**  
Income tax credit for sales or rentals of agricultural assets to beginning farmers and farmer financial management programs provided.

## LATE ACTION

### Committee approves smoking ban

Minnesota may become one of 20 states to impose a statewide smoking ban.

The so-called "Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007" would prohibit smoking in public places, places of employment, public transportation and at public meetings.

**Rep. Thomas Huntley** (DFL-Duluth), sponsor of **HF305**, told the House Health Care and Human Services Committee Feb. 1 that his No. 1 concern with this legislation is "worker protection."

"You should not have to choose between your health and a job," he said.

Arguments were fierce from proponents and

opponents of the bill, which was ultimately approved 12-6 and sent to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. Six amendments, including one exempting establishments who install high-powered ventilators from the ban, were not added to the legislation.

Opponents argued workers can choose where they want to work, and expressed concern about the economic effects of a ban.

Mike McFarland, owner of Paul Bunyan Bowl in Brainerd and representing the Bowling Proprietors Association of Minnesota, said, "It will cost me 15 percent to 20 percent of my league bowlers. The season is long and even losing 15 percent may not allow me to keep the operation going and pass it on to my son. ... Something that isn't illegal will lead to my business failing."

Some also said such a mandate infringes on rights of business owners.

"It is not the role of industry to choose how we serve our guests. It's our choice to allow smoking and it's a customer's decision to come to our establishment," said Steven Watson, president of Minnesota Restaurant Association.

**Rep. Dan Severson** (R-Sauk Rapids), a co-sponsor of the bill, said above all the legislation offers employees, regardless of their trade, a smoke-free environment. "The goal is to even the playing field across the state. Workers have a right to a health hazard-free work area."

A companion bill, **SF238**, sponsored by **Sen. Kathy Sheran** (DFL-Mankato), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 5 by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

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**Sources: Watershed Management, Office of the Legislative Auditor, Jan. 25, 2007; The Freshwater Society; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, including Watershed Achievements Report, September 2006.**

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