

SESSION WEEKLY

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
VOLUME 25, NUMBER 2 • FEBRUARY 22, 2008



CAPITAL CRISIS VS. CAPITAL INVESTMENT

TRANSPORTATION'S ON THE ROAD

DOGS PUT ON A SHORT LEASH

CASH FOR CHOO-CHOOS

HF3018 - HF3347



SESSION WEEKLY

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

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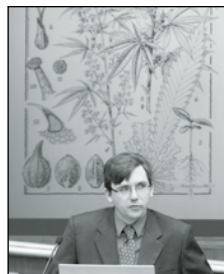
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Session Weekly (ISSN 1049-8176) is published weekly during the legislative session by Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298. Periodicals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

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

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



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On the cover: John Lippert of Hudson, N.Y., restores the plaster and paint of the third floor of the State Capitol to its original look. Lippert has been working in the Capitol since September and expects to finish within the week. Elmer E. Garnsey painted the original murals in the early 1900s, working closely with the building architect, Cass Gilbert.

—Photo by: Sarah Stacke

Eyes on the bond market

Capital crisis intersects with capital investment

The House Capital Investment Finance Division meets Feb. 19.

PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

As members of the various House finance divisions scrambled this week to ready their capital bonding proposals, across the Capitol Mall, Department of Finance staffers were keeping a wary eye on the bond market.

Could the state capital investment bill be affected by what some financial analysts are calling a developing bond-insurance crisis?

Over the past months, financial problems have surfaced with some major bond insurers, as they have found their own investments entangled in the subprime mortgage mess. Their poor investments have led to a lessening of their credit rating, in some cases. And without a doubt, some municipalities have found limited access to purchasing bond insurance, and their overall cost of borrowing increasing.

Credit counts

As anyone borrowing money for a new car or house knows, credit counts — and the better your score, the better the interest rate and the more apt you are to get money.

It's no different for the state when it goes looking for financing.

If the state has good credit, most likely it will have little trouble accessing the credit market, said Kathy Kardell, Department of Finance assistant commissioner.

Credit crunch may not necessarily have an effect on state-financed projects, but for small communities or agencies with lower credit ratings, there could be problems.

Fortunately, the state's credit rating is almost perfect with the three top rating firms; Fitch Ratings and Standard & Poor's rate it at AAA, while Moody's Investors Service gives it a notch below at Aa1.

"The people that will have difficulty (accessing funds) will be lower rated credits who, at least in the past, needed credit enhancement, which they typically purchased in the form of municipal bond insurance," Kardell said. These days, only one of the big four insurers has seen their credit rating remain in good standing, she said.

What buyers want

It's not only the state's good credit that will make bonds attractive to investors, it's the type of bond that would be issued. In the case of capital improvements, they are funded by general obligation bonds.

Kardell explained that these bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the state. According to the department Web site, this means the state has pledged to levy a statewide property tax to pay the debt service costs, if necessary.

In short, the "state will do whatever it needs to do to pay the bonds off, if it wants to maintain its credit rating," she said. "If you don't do that, carry through on your general obligation pledge, your credit rating would be tremendously affected and your ability to access funds in the market would too."

The credit crunch may not necessarily be affecting state-financed projects, but for small communities or agencies with lower credit ratings, there could be problems.

As with each bonding year, communities come forward to the Legislature with projects they'd like to have the state support. For some communities with lower credit ratings, however, getting eligible projects onto the state's bonding list may be crucial to the project's future.

Kardell explained that a small community

First Reading continued on page 4

may be rated in an A category, and in the past, if they were selling bonds of any size, they would almost always access bond insurance to attract buyers. Now, that may not be an option.

In terms of selling bonds, whether at the state or local level, investors are looking to underlying credit, she said, and obviously the better the credit the happier the buyers are going to be.

Buying and selling

So, once the state gets the OK to sell bonds, who buys them? Kardell said it's generally not banks, but bond funds, insurance companies and individuals — especially through their trust accounts.

Right now, bond rates are very low for investors, making it a good time for the state to sell bonds. She pointed to a recent bond buyer index showing general obligation bonds at 4.47 percent on a 20-year bond. "In the last 12 months it has been as high as 4.81 and as low as 4.08 percent," she said. "So rates have been extremely low."

As Kardell watches Minnesota's capital investment bill move forward, she is watching the interest rate fluxuations closely.

The bond market, like the stock market, is seeing great volatility. If a capital investment bill is enacted, Kardell's concern is scheduling the bond sale.

"We do our best to schedule the state's sale around known bad times, like when the Federal Reserve is meeting or other events that could potentially affect the market. But that's something you can't control. If you are unlucky, we could be taking bids for our bonds on a day when rates are a little bit ziggy-zaggy." But even so, the spikes are low, so the state most likely could be looking at paying out a relatively low interest rate, she said. 🏠

Frequently called numbers

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It's about jobs and equity

No 'dilly-dallying' around for capital investment proposals

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul) is reading the financial pages of the newspaper more than usual these days. Although she's aware of the problems facing bond insurers, as chairwoman of the House Capital Investment Finance Division, her focus is getting a capital investment bill onto the House floor, maybe even by the end of next week.

It's been no secret that the House majority is determined to get two bills quickly onto the governor's desk; the transportation bill, and a capital investment bill.

The urgency, according to Hausman, comes from the state's projected deficit; recently released numbers showing a decline in the number of jobs in the state; and the worsening national economy.

The state can't do too much about some of the root causes of the economic turndown — the price of oil and the housing and credit troubles, she said. "Most of these problems will require federal solutions, but we think we can do something about jobs."

She said enacted transportation and capital investment bills can kick-start the process.

"We didn't want to dilly-dally around and not get that money out there. If that transportation bill passes and the bonding bill passes and we can get them to the governor by March 15, that money could be out there and carpenters and trades people would be put back to work."

Hausman set an aggressive goal for finance division chairs to get their bonding bills heard, prioritized and wrapped into a proposal by Feb. 21.

Beginning Feb. 25, the proposals are scheduled to be heard in the House Capital Investment Finance Division, which would begin crafting the bill for consideration. "Our job is to figure out what we have room for this year," she said.

Division members will be looking for regional equity and equity between the various interest areas of need, such as education, transportation, and health and human services, she said. "We'll try to put together a balanced bill that addresses the highest priorities."

She'll also be looking for bills that need to move forward because there is a deadline for

a federal matching grant, such as the central corridor transit project.

How much to spend?

When the February Economic Forecast is released Feb. 28, the projected \$373 million deficit for the current biennium is expected to grow. Generally, the amount available for a bonding bill is determined at that time. Historically, it is capped at 3 percent of the General Fund. But Hausman said that number is not carved in stone, and she left open the possibility that the capital investment bill may deviate from the practice.

"Way back when Rudy Perpich was governor, he said we should have some sort of

guideline to keep our borrowing in check, and they arbitrarily arrived at 3 percent of the General Fund. It's not in our constitution, it's not in statute; it's not even a rule. It's an informal guideline," she said.

She prefers the calculation be based off debt as a percentage of personal income ratio. Hausman said that in 2004, the national average for debt as percent of personal income was 2.4 percent; in peer

states, it was 2.9 percent. Minnesota was at 1.8 percent.

"So to say that we absolutely can't spend one penny over the 3 percent of the General Fund, is in some sense, irrelevancy," she said.

However, this may not be a battle she is willing to wage at this time, and she expects the division's bonding request to come in near or at the governor's goal of \$965 million in general obligation bonding.

There are similarities between the House and the governor's priorities, but she questions his stipulation that no local projects be included when a Duluth arena project is in his request.

"It would have been easier if he hadn't put it in, because once you put it in, it's harder to argue with other cities that their projects don't have merit. That equity thing is what cities watch for," she said.

Division members traveled the state this summer reviewing projects and she said the locals were "thrilled when we came to town ... it was front page news." To dismiss their projects as pork "insults the average Minnesotan." There is a good in helping many of these so-called local projects, she said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

"To say that we absolutely can't spend one penny over the 3 percent of the General Fund, is in some sense, irrelevancy."

— Rep. Alice Hausman,
House Capital Investment Finance
Division chairwoman

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees and other House activities held Feb. 14-21. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; Ch-Chapter; and *-the bill, version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Problems surface with 'Green Acres'

The 40-year-old Green Acres program, along with two other agricultural land preservation programs, generally reduces property taxes for farmers whose land value is high due to nonagricultural factors, according to a report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor. The general consensus on the purpose of the program is to save farmland by easing the pressure on owners who could be tempted or pressured into selling their land at a high price for development.

But the report, presented to the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division Feb. 15, finds the program doesn't always protect those "green acres" from development in the long run.

No action was taken, but Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth), the division chairman, said the issue would likely be addressed this session, either by tweaking current law or adopting major changes.

The report found program problems, including:

- it does not help all who are eligible, either because landowners don't know about it or choose not to apply;
- the specific purpose of the program is not outlined in law;
- eligibility criteria are outdated and difficult to implement fairly; and
- it does not always protect farmland in the long run, as some owners wait until land prices increase dramatically and then sell.

In 2007, the program reduced landowners' property taxes by about \$40 million. With such a large tax break, the report recommended clarifying current law by stating exactly who should benefit, giving local agencies more responsibility to enforce preservation programs and developing other strategies to encourage owners to keep their farmland.

— C. BLANCHARD

Bill lays out policy on hemp

Minnesota could join a neighboring state in its effort to allow the growing of industrial hemp.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 20 that North Dakota is taking the lead on challenging federal law.

The bill she sponsors, HF2168, would lay out policy for industrial hemp production in the state. However, Kahn said that nothing could happen "until Congress approves the change and the Department of Drug Enforcement actually has granted an application for somewhere." The bill would only be saying that "after the problems are taken care of on the federal level, we'd be ready to go," she said.

The committee approved the bill, and it now moves to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. There is no Senate companion.

Hemp production was banned by the 1970 Controlled Substances Act, largely because of fears the plant could mask growth of its cousin, the marijuana plant.

Until that time, industrial hemp was grown legally in the United States for a wide variety of purposes, including cloth and paper production. Kahn said that Betsy



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

George Weiblen, University of Minnesota associate professor of plant biology, testifies before the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veteran Affairs Committee Feb. 20 on a bill that would develop the industrial hemp industry in Minnesota.

Ross used hemp to create the first American flag, and that a draft of the Declaration of Independence was written on paper made from hemp.

Supporters say that products made from industrial hemp grown in Canada are currently available in this country.

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Wabasha) said hemp grows freely in the state, and is considered a noxious weed. His concern that its presence would only increase in ditches and elsewhere was supported by George Weiblen, a University of Minnesota Department of Plant Biology professor and researcher.

— L. SCHUTZ

BIOSCIENCE

Incentives for biotech investors

A pair of bills sponsored by Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) would provide tax incentives designed to stimulate investment in biotechnology startup companies in Minnesota.

The first, HF3143, would create a 25 percent "angel investor" tax credit for those who invest in qualifying Minnesota-based biotech companies, with the total maximum statewide credit capped at \$3 million. The second, HF3144, would prevent investors living outside the state who invest money in Minnesota biotech companies from having to pay state taxes on any investment gains.

Both bills would apply only to investments involving companies with fewer than 25 employees.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bills Feb. 19 after hearing testimony from experts who said the state's tax policies are partially responsible for stunting growth in its biobusiness sector.

John Alexander, president and CEO of Chameleon Scientific and chairman of the Twin Cities Angels investor group, said Minnesota has fallen dramatically behind other states in its ability to attract lucrative, high-tech bioscience companies.

Alexander advocated lower taxes, fewer regulations and greater investment in scientific and technical education to foster a friendlier climate for biotech.

Meanwhile, Michael Berman, who serves on the boards of 12 different medical technology companies, played down the importance of taxes and argued instead that the state should focus on creating "infrastructure" — a high-quality education system and research

institutions capable of partnering with the private sector.

HF3143 now goes to the House Finance Committee and HF3144 to the House Taxes Committee. Neither bill has a Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

BUSINESS

Investing in Minnesota businesses

A bill that would ask the State Board of Investment to invest more of its assets in Minnesota-based companies was approved by a House committee.

HF3142, sponsored by Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley), would ask the board to “attempt to ensure” that at least 1 percent of its private equity investments are in venture capital businesses with a majority of their employees in Minnesota. The bill is designed to help provide more startup capital to newer, smaller companies — particularly in high-tech fields like bioscience.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bill Feb. 20. It now goes to the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. The bill has no Senate companion.

The board is responsible for managing the \$63.5 billion worth of retirement funds, trust funds and cash accounts currently invested by the state. Howard Bicker, the board’s executive director, said that while it has a “pretty good record” of investing in Minnesota companies, the board’s primary mission is to make investments that yield a high rate of return, regardless of their location.

“The State Board of Investment is not really in the economic development business; we’re in the trying-to-make-money business,” he said, adding that the board never passes up an in-state investment opportunity when it’s a good deal.

Don Gerhardt, CEO of LifeScience Alley, disputed that claim, arguing that many potentially lucrative venture capital startups in Minnesota are ignored because of their small size. Calling the bill “extremely important,” he noted that other states have taken similar measures to help grow their high-tech business communities.

— N. BUSSE

CRIME

Juvenile interrogation protection

Amy Erickson was 15 years old when she was abducted by three men just blocks from her Dakota County home. She escaped before she could be sexually assaulted.

But her nightmare was far from over.

The police interrogated her for more than two hours, until she said the incident did not happen.

“I was a victim turned into a criminal,” she told the House Crime Victims Subcommittee Feb. 15, fighting off tears. “I always grew up trying to trust the police. ... I didn’t know I could walk out of the room. I didn’t know my rights.”

Warren Robinson, a private investigator, said the interrogation videotape shows Amy asking for her mother, Cindy.

“She felt the only way out of this situation was to tell them what they wanted to hear,” Cindy Erickson said.

Amy Erickson was later charged with falsifying a report to police. That charge was later dropped after it was fought by the family. She believes the police never went after her attackers.

Sponsored by Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park), HF3007 would prohibit juveniles under age 16 from waiving their right to counsel during custodial interrogations, unless a juvenile’s attorney, parent or custodian, under certain circumstances, makes the waiver. The juvenile may also knowingly and voluntarily consent to the waiver.

“It’s not requiring that a parent be there. It’s giving that as an option,” Simon said.

Approved by the subcommittee, it was sent to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. It has no Senate companion.

David Brown, an assistant Hennepin County attorney, said the bill could be problematic.

He said defendants are getting younger

and their crimes are becoming more severe, especially when it comes to gang activity. Plus, he said it could sometimes be troublesome to determine a child’s parent or guardian, and then it could take days to find that person.

— M. COOK

DEVELOPMENT

Funds sought for new Duluth arena

Since the Duluth Arena opened in 1966, the Met Center in Bloomington and St. Paul Civic Center have come and gone.

Now, supporters say it is time for a new arena near the shore of Lake Superior.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), HF2793 will provide \$40.28 million in state money for a new arena across the parking lot from the current facility.

The bill was held over Feb. 18 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its bonding recommendations. The appropriation is in the governor’s bonding request.

In addition to providing a new home for the University of Minnesota-Duluth men’s and women’s hockey programs, the facility would provide more convention space, would attract more national entertainers that don’t now come to the city because the current arena seating capacity isn’t large enough, and is expected to bring in millions of new dollars in shopping, lodging and dining. The new facility is expected to seat 7,000 for hockey games and more than 8,500 for concerts. The current arena would remain for other uses.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

The Duluth Entertainment Convention Center Authority (DECC) is requesting \$40.2 million to replace the current arena.

Dan Russell, executive director of the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, said the arena would be designed to maximize energy efficiencies, including continued use of local, renewable resources.

State funding would be matched by a 0.75 percent increase in the city's food and beverage tax approved by city voters in February 2006. "That local match still works with UMD as a full partner," Russell said.

If funding is approved, construction would begin in the fall. "We're looking at 300 good trades jobs for two years, and trade jobs we can get going this year," Russell said.

A companion bill, SF2426, sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. COOK

EDUCATION

Facilities grant program proposed

A \$5 million request to fund early childhood learning facilities across the state is at the forefront of the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division's bonding request.

On Feb. 14, the division approved the bonding request, bundled in HF2561. The request awaits action by the House Capital Investment Finance Division.

Sponsored by Division Chairwoman Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), the bill would establish grants to fund preschool and child care centers in areas with high poverty. To be eligible, the facilities must be owned or leased from state or local government agencies.

Richard Bartz, principal of Houston Elementary School, said the school district would apply for a grant to renovate the upstairs of an old Presbyterian church donated to the district. The district renovated the basement for use by preschoolers after the kindergarten expanded to an all-day program in its old location. With more room, the district could lengthen preschool hours, provide parenting classes and house other early childhood programs, Bartz said.

Beth Stanford, director of Semcac Head Start in southeast Minnesota, said the grants would help expand a program that's already had some success in pooling resources of several rural Head Start centers.

"We're serving a primarily rural population, and that's difficult for our program to reach all the families of need. It's just not cost effective for us to have a Head Start center in every small town in our six-county area," she said.

The bonding request also includes a \$3 million recommendation to fund a child and parent resource center in Austin.

Sen. Tarryl Clark (DFL-St. Cloud) sponsors the companion bill, SF2493, which awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. The Senate version does not include a funding request for the Austin Area Success Center.

— C. BLANCHARD

A new education office proposed

An Office of Early Childhood Education may be established.

HF2983, sponsored by Rep. Sandra Peterson (DFL-New Hope), would require the governor to appoint a director of the office, with the goal of providing high quality early childhood programs to address challenges families face affecting school readiness and academic success. There is no companion bill in the Senate.

Approved Feb. 18 by the House E-12 Education Committee, it was sent to the House Finance Committee.

This director would coordinate the administration of the early childhood programs and child care programs administered by the Education and Human Services departments, create effective early childhood programs and create a transition between early childhood education and kindergarten.

Art Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said this is an issue of economic development, and it is the best investment the state can make.

"I think this would be a watershed for the state of Minnesota," he said, adding that businesses in the state support the measure.

No fiscal note was provided.

Karen Cadigan, director of outreach and public policy for the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota, said significantly less time and money are spent on early learners as opposed to K-12 education.

Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan) asked if anybody in the Department of Education currently performs these tasks, and if families would be forced to participate.

"I'm concerned with large government, more bureaucracy," Wardlow said.

Peterson said that as both parents work in more households, more children are being cared for by relatives or in day care. Participation in early childhood programs would remain voluntary, she said.

— T. HAMMELL

Funding renewable energy projects

A bill to help public K-12 schools design renewable energy projects was held over Feb. 19 by the House K-12 Finance Division for possible inclusion in its bonding bill.

HF3178, sponsored by Rep. Brita Sailer

(DFL-Park Rapids), would provide \$5 million in state bonding money for wind, solar or closed-loop geothermal energy projects that would pay for themselves in 15 years. A companion, SF2972, sponsored by Sen. Sandy Rummel (DFL-White Bear Lake), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

"I think we have so much synergy between energy applications and the environment," Sailer said.

Two witnesses, who were involved in a solar wall project in the St. Anthony-New Brighton School District, shared their experience with the division.

"This solar wall was the first in the state of Minnesota to be installed," said Bernie Eikmeier, project manager for McKinstry Essention. The system uses solar energy to heat air, which is then tied into the heating system of the building. The project was expected to pay for itself in 12 years, but engineers now expect it to pay for itself in eight.

Eikmeier said he was skeptical himself of the project, but was surprised when on a bright November day when the outside temperature was 6 degrees that no additional heating was required.

— T. HAMMELL

K-12 bonding recommendations

The House K-12 Finance Division sent its education funding omnibus bill to the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division Feb. 20.

HF2558, sponsored by Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), started as a library improvement and accessibility bill, but was amended to become the division's omnibus finance bill.

A companion, SF2682, sponsored by Sen. Dan Skogen (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. It contains only the library grants.

The \$108.7 million in requests are given one of three priorities.

Proposals with a high ranking include asset preservation for the state academies for the deaf and blind, the Perpich Center for Arts Education, library accessibility grants and a grant for the Red Lake School District for building construction.

Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville), the division chairwoman, said almost everything that came before the division would be listed as a high priority in some committees.

"We can fight for anything on the list," Greiling said.

Only \$7 million of the recommendations is included in the governor's bonding proposal for Minnesota State Academies and the Perpich Center for Arts Education.

The state academies are slated for just over

\$2.7 million in asset preservation, and \$3.3 million to renovate Mott Hall on the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf campus.

Pawlenty recommends \$999,000 for projects at the Perpich Center for Arts Education for asset preservation.

None of the \$91.6 million recommended for Department of Education projects in the finance division are included in the governor's proposal.

— T. HAMMELL

ELECTIONS

Exemptions for campaign reporting

Some lobbying activity could become exempt from campaign finance reporting requirements.

Sponsored by Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona) and Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), HF1036/SF758* would exempt lobbying activity at the Legislature related to certifying a ballot question for placement on a statewide ballot. It makes a distinction between lobbying the Legislature to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot and actually campaigning for voters to approve or reject the amendment once on the ballot.

It was approved, Feb. 14, by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee and sent to the House floor. The bill was approved 65-0 by the Senate last year.

Expenditures in excess of \$100 on activities designed to promote or defeat a ballot question must now be reported to the board.

Marcia Avner, public policy director of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, said the ruling that lobbying on constitutional amendments must be reported as political activity poses a problem for nonprofits and charities.

"We don't have political PACS. We don't do political activity," Avner said. "We understand that in the period of time when a group may be working on a ballot initiative that may be more political, but when we are lobbying at the Legislature we want to be consistent with all our other federal and state lobbying requirements. We report our lobbying at the Legislature as lobbying."

— B. HOGENSON

EMPLOYMENT

Labor agreement option

A bill that would once again allow state departments to enter into construction contracts containing labor agreements cleared its first House division.

BULLY FOR UMD



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

"Champ," the University of Minnesota-Duluth mascot, takes part in a Capitol Rotunda rally Feb. 20. Representatives from all University of Minnesota campuses were in St. Paul to gain support for the university's bonding request and other issues.

Rep. Mike Nelson (DFL-Brooklyn Park) sponsors HF1596, which would overturn a 2005 executive order by Gov. Tim Pawlenty barring this practice. Nelson said the legislation would not mandate the agreements, but would give the option; adding that in these agreements, unions give up the right to strike before a project is completed.

Approved Feb. 15 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division, the bill was sent to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

A companion bill (SF1252), sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Dick Anfang, president of the State Building and Construction Trades Council, said these

types of agreements were allowed before the governor signed his executive order. These agreements provide uniformity between the groups working on the project, and are widely used in the private sector, he said.

Robert Heise, president of the Associated Building Contractors, Inc. Minnesota chapter, said this would essentially eliminate competition and would adversely affect non-union contractors. "The devil is in the details," he said.

— T. HAMMELL

Bill would raise the minimum wage

For some, the minimum wage is a matter of dollars and cents. Adequate pay given for work done. For others, it's a matter of justice.

Approved Feb. 14 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee, HF456/SF875*, sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) and Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), would raise the state minimum wage above the federal standard, currently at \$5.85 an hour. Already passed by the Senate, it now goes to the House floor.

The bill would raise the minimum wage for large employers (companies with annual sales of \$625,000 or more) to \$6.90 as of July 24, 2008, and to \$7.90 one year later. For small employers (companies with annual sales less than \$625,000), the minimum wage would be \$5.75 and \$6.75 respectively.

The bill would also eliminate the “training wage” which allows employers to pay a lower minimum wage – \$4.90 an hour – to employees under 20 years of age.

Speaking in favor of the bill, Archbishop Harry Flynn of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis said, “We have a long standing belief in the dignity of the worker, and we need to continue this tradition by increasing the minimum wage in a way that demonstrates the value we put not only on our work, but on our workers. This is a matter of justice, not charity.”

Dave Dederichs, manager of fiscal and labor/management policy at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, said the state should conform to the federal minimum wage which is scheduled to go up 70 cents in July and will be \$7.25 by July 2009. He also said the bill is flawed because it ties an inflationary index to the minimum wage.

— C. GREEN

ENERGY

Energy bonding recommendations

Three energy-related projects have been recommended for bonding: an energy efficiency program for municipal buildings; a waste-to-energy facility in Hutchinson; and a steam pipeline for the Rochester Community and Technical College.

On Feb. 18, the House Energy Finance and Policy Division approved HF1392, which contains its bonding recommendations for 2008. Sponsored by Division Chairman Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), it now goes to the House Finance Committee.

The three initiatives included in the recommendations are organized by level of priority. On the top of the list, with the highest priority, is a \$10 million request for the Department of Commerce for “green bonds” — grants to municipalities to improve the energy efficiency of public buildings. This comes from a bill (HF1951) sponsored

by Rep. Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton). A companion bill, SF2358, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Second on the list with a “medium” level of priority is a high tech power plant that would turn solid waste into a source of energy. A \$2.5 million appropriation would fund a plasma arc demonstration facility, to be located in Hutchinson. This comes from a bill (HF167) sponsored by Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls). A companion bill, SF171, sponsored by Sen. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

The third item on the list, designated a “low” priority, is a \$6 million appropriation for the design and construction of a steam pipeline from an Olmsted County waste-to-energy facility to the Rochester Community and Technical College campus. It would supply the college with steam heat and cooling. This comes from HF2776, sponsored by Rep. Kim Norton (DFL-Rochester). A companion bill, SF2658, sponsored by Senate Minority Leader David Senjem (R-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. BUSSE

ENVIRONMENT

3M cleanup pledge questioned

Several members of a House subcommittee expressed frustration that the 3M Corporation will not be paying a larger share of the cost of cleaning up a landfill that has been leeching chemical pollutants into the east metro drinking water supply.

The House Drinking Water Source Protection Subcommittee met Feb. 19 to discuss bonding recommendations for the Pollution Control Agency. Among the topics of discussion was a \$15 million request for remediation work at the Washington County Landfill, which is contaminated by perfluorochemicals (PFCs) that are presumed to have been manufactured by 3M.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty has asked the Legislature to approve the request, which would be supplemented by an additional \$8 million pledged by 3M, to help clean up the Lake Elmo site. Several legislators expressed concern that the state’s taxpayers are being asked to pay for more than their fair share.

“I don’t know why they (taxpayers) should be paying when they were not responsible and they didn’t know about it,” said Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls).

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) said that 3M, as the primary — possibly the sole — source of the contamination, should contribute more

to the cost of the remediation.

Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) agreed that 3M should be pressured to put up additional money for the project, but also praised the company’s willingness to negotiate, as well as their overall contribution to the state’s economy over the years.

“They’ve been admitting that we’ve got to deal with this problem and I think they’re doing it in a positive way,” McNamara said.

Other members questioned the method that’s being proposed to clean up the site.

Rep. Julie Bunn (DFL-Lake Elmo) has introduced a bill that would appropriate an as-yet-undetermined amount of bond money to fund alternative cleanup methods; however, Bunn said that whatever solution is ultimately chosen, action needs to be taken as soon as possible.

“From the citizen’s perspective, what’s most important is that we move this along,” Bunn said.

Bunn’s bill, HF3232, awaits action by the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. There is no Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

‘Clean cars’ emissions standards

A House committee approved a bill that would adopt California’s aggressive “clean cars” vehicle emissions standards for Minnesota.

HF863, sponsored by Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), would enact California’s policy, which is designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light-duty trucks 30 percent by 2016. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill Feb. 14 after amending it with some technical changes.

“Under federal law, you have two choices: you have California or the federal standard,” Hortman said, summarizing a complicated and decades-long series of legal maneuvers that have resulted in states being able to opt for either the entire federal standards or the entire California standards, but not parts of both.

More than a dozen other states have already adopted the California standards, which the auto industry opposes. Hortman said the measure is a necessary step forward in reaching the state’s goal of a comprehensive climate change strategy, as outlined in last year’s Next Generation Energy Act.

The new standards would apply to all new passenger vehicles model 2009 and later that are sold or registered in the state. Automakers could use any combination of a number of existing technologies to reduce emissions. However, the standards are currently being challenged in court by the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency.

Representatives of the auto industry warned that the California standards could hurt Minnesota's ethanol industry as well as raise the price of new vehicles. Greg Dana, a lobbyist for the Alliance of Automotive Manufacturers, called the standards "too aggressive, too soon," and added that E-85 and flex-fuel vehicles were unlikely to be able to meet the standards.

Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) was among several committee members who expressed concern about what they saw as ceding control of environmental policy in Minnesota to the California Air Resources Board, which has the power to change the standards at will.

The bill awaits action by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A Senate companion, SF481, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Watershed management reform

A bill that proposes a sweeping reorganization of the way Minnesota's waters are managed was approved by a House committee.

HF2536, sponsored by Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), would organize the state into nine watershed basins districts, each governed by a "basin board," and further require water management entities within those districts to coordinate with each other before receiving any state funding. The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill Feb. 19 and referred it to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee. It has no Senate companion.

A watershed is an area of land in which all water flows into a lake, river or stream; basins typically comprise numerous watersheds. Currently, the state's watersheds are managed by an uneven and often overlapping patchwork of watershed districts, water management organizations and a slew of other local entities as well as several state-level agencies. With his bill, Lanning seeks to organize water management on a basin-wide level.

Opponents worry that the state would merely be adding another level of bureaucracy to an already complicated system. Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji) asked Lanning why the Board of Water and Soil Resources couldn't perform the same functions as the proposed basin boards.

Lanning responded that state agencies like BWSR are often frustrated by the "countless organizations and political entities" that they have to work with to do their job. He argued that the basin boards would make it easier for

the state to deal with individual government entities by organizing them.

The bill originally would have allowed the basin boards to levy property taxes up to \$1 million per basin. Committee Chairman Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) successfully amended the bill to remove the basins' taxing authority, arguing that property taxes are already too burdensome and that it would slow the bill's progress.

— N. BUSSE

Bonding proposals completed

The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division completed its bonding recommendations for the biennium.

HF2957, sponsored by Division Chairwoman Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls), contains bonding recommendations for the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Board of Water and Soil Resources and Metropolitan Council. The division approved the bill Feb. 21 and referred it to the House Finance Committee.

The bill recommends \$153.6 million for the DNR; \$16.5 million for the PCA; \$48 million for BWSR; and \$23.7 million for metropolitan parks, for a grand total of \$241.8 million in mostly general obligation bonds. The bill represents \$113.7 million more than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's recommendations.

Wagenius said the bill was crafted specifically to provide as many jobs as possible.

A Senate companion, SF2952, sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Trails advocates make their case

Advocates for state and regional trails lined up Feb. 18 to plead their case for state bond money before the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division.

Division Chairwoman Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) warned testifiers up-front that they were competing with each other for a very limited pool of funds.

"You should know that this committee adores trails. That is not an issue. The issue is ... we don't have an unlimited pocketbook," Wagenius told one testifier.

In all, the division members took testimony on more than 20 bills. Among the largest requests, Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji) sponsors HF3002, a \$29 million request to fund 16 state trail projects that together represent the wish list of the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota.

Moe said the projects are vital to the local economy and to the state's tourism industry. "We need to accelerate and move forward," he

said, adding that the bill would create jobs for the state almost immediately.

A companion bill, SF2490, sponsored by Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Other highlights included:

- a \$10 million request and a separate \$2 million request to complete the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway and upgrade its lighting fixtures (HF3176 and HF2829, both sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls));
- a \$2.19 million request to fund the Rice Creek North Regional Trail in Anoka County (HF2461, sponsored by Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview)); and
- a \$2 million request for a project to remove and replace the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge in Bloomington (HF2707, sponsored by Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington)).

All of the bills were held over for possible inclusion in the division's bonding recommendations.

— N. BUSSE

No funds for biofuel crops program

A newly established program to pay landowners to develop their lands for producing biofuel crops will likely go unfunded this year.

A \$40 million bonding request for the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Clean Energy Program was not included in the recommendations approved by the House Watersheds, Wetlands and Buffers Subcommittee. The program was established by the Board of Water and Soil Resources last year at the request of the Legislature.

"We have to make some choices," said Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), whose bill, HF2731, includes a \$42 million bond appropriation for the RIM Reserve program, administered by the board.

Hansen explained that the state currently has limited funds at its disposal. He said the RIM Reserve Program is a better investment because it can leverage \$1.40 in federal funds for every \$1 in state money spent. He added that some of the RIM Reserve funds could be used for similar purposes as the RIM Clean Energy Program.

Critics of the subcommittee's recommendations included Don Arnosti, forestry program director for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. He said the subcommittee was missing a huge opportunity to establish native perennial biofuel crops on working agricultural lands.

"I believe you're making a tremendous mistake that you will regret for many years," he said.

A Senate companion, SF2640, sponsored by Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The recommendations have also been rolled into HF2957, sponsored by Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls), which contains the bonding recommendations of the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. A companion bill, SF2952, sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— N. BUSSE

GAME & FISH

Bill would regulate ballast water

A bill that would regulate ballast water discharges by oceangoing vessels in Lake Superior had its first hearing in a House division, but will apparently require more work before it goes further.

HF2963, sponsored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), is designed to curb the spread of aquatic invasive species, including the deadly viral hemorrhagic septicemia fish-killing virus, by ships that travel through the Great Lakes. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division laid the bill over Feb. 18.

Aquatic invasive organisms can be transported across great distances by surviving in ships' ballast tanks and then being discharged along with the ballast water into new places, where they often wreak ecological havoc. The bill would establish regulations through the Pollution Control Agency that would force ships to treat their ballast water for invasive species before discharging it.

Henry VanOffelen, a natural resource scientist with the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, said 30 years of regulatory inaction has allowed nonnative species to invade the Great Lakes at a rate of roughly one new species per year. He said ballast water discharges are the source for a majority of the species.

Some would prefer a federal solution to the problem. Adolph Ojard, executive director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, said the maritime community supports ballast water regulations but would prefer a national and/or international policy.

Paul Eger, assistant commissioner of the PCA, said his agency is working on a permitting process for ballast discharges that could be implemented as early as September. He said the bill in its current form was problematic, and that a series of technical changes would likely be necessary before it could become law.

Division Chairman Rep. David Dill (DFL-

Crane Lake) agreed with Eger, adding that his division would likely "iron out a few wrinkles" before moving the bill forward.

A companion bill, SF2517, sponsored by Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— N. BUSSE

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Blood donation age could lower

The House Health and Human Services Committee approved a bill Feb. 19 that would lower the blood donation age to 15 if the person obtains written permission from the person's parent or guardian.

On its way to the House floor, HF1066, sponsored by Rep. Patti Fritz (DFL-Faribault), was the idea of high school student Joe Gibson, who came up with the proposal after seeing his grandfather's energy increase following blood transfusions during cancer treatments. Gibson said he attempted to give blood at his local high school blood drive soon after, but was turned away because of age requirements. The current age requirement is 17 years old.

Several states already allow 16-year-olds to donate, including: California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oregon and Washington.

There was no opposition to the bill.

A Senate companion, SF2471, sponsored by Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the full Senate.

— P. OSTBERG

Human Services bonding priorities set

The House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division approved a \$139.8 million bonding request Feb. 20.

HF2091, sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), prioritizes the division's recommendations from high to medium. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

High priority projects would include: asset preservation and safety and security for several Department of Human Services' treatment centers, grants to the Hennepin County Medical Center and a Native American juvenile treatment center.

Medium priority projects would include: phase two expansion of the Moose Lake Sex Offender Treatment Facility, a multi-county chemical dependency treatment facility and correctional center, Remembering with Dignity money for grave markers and memorial monuments, and renovation to Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare in St. Paul.

The asset preservation, safety and security upgrades to already built facilities, and repair or demolishing of buildings at the Brainerd Regional Human Services Center are included in the governor's recommendations. The remainder of the projects are not.

HCMC is planning a \$175 million expansion and would be appropriated \$28 million from the state once \$146 million has been committed to the project from nonstate sources. The monies would be used for an education learning center for training rooms and labs.

Erma Vizenor, tribal chair woman for the White Earth Reservation, said the Native American juvenile treatment center would incorporate cultural and spiritual programs to help serve juveniles from all tribes in Minnesota. A former treatment center in Bemidji is now being considered as the location, she said. Under the bill, \$6 million would be available to construct the facility on or near the White Earth Reservation.

The Senate companion, SF1727, sponsored by Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), contains no bonding provisions. That bill was included in last year's health and human services law.

— P. OSTBERG

Human services bill

The Minnesota Department of Human Services presented a \$99.9 million bonding request to the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division Feb. 14. Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), the division chairman, said the proposal could be included in the division's bonding request.

A large portion of the money would be used to finish an expansion at the Moose Lake Sex Offender Treatment Facility. HF2815, sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), would authorize \$90 million to finish a project that will expand bed capacity from 150 to 800.

A Senate companion, SF2679, sponsored by Sen. Tony Lourey (DFL-Kerrick), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

The request is not included in the governor's recommendations.

The remainder of the request would be used for asset preservation, safety and security upgrades to current facilities, and to repair or demolish buildings at the Brainerd Regional Human Services Center. Those portions are included in the governor's recommendations.

The \$90 million Moose Lake request would begin phase two and "ensure that adequate bed capacity is maintained to facilitate the level of court ordered commitments that the department projects will continue until longer sentencing guidelines for sex offenses mandated by the 2005 Legislature

actually begin to impact the annual number of referrals to the Minnesota Sex Offender Program,” according to the department.

The Legislature first appropriated funds for 100 beds at the Moose Lake facility in 1994. In 1998 money was appropriated for an additional 50 beds. In 2006, \$44.6 million was appropriated for the first phase of the expansion.

— P. OSTBERG

Smoking cleanup costs

Currently, anyone caught lighting up in a nonsmoking hotel or motel room could be charged no more than \$100.

If signed into law, HF1825, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), would fine the smoker for the cost of restoring the room to its original condition. The bill was approved by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 14, and sent to the House floor.

David Siegel, president and CEO of the Minnesota Lodging Association, said that according to association findings, each incident can cost an establishment between \$225 and \$250 for clean up, and it happens approximately twice a month. This adds up to a yearly cost of \$6,000, and only 20 to 25 percent of the cost is recouped, he said.

On each registration form, there is an agreement that the guest will pay an extra charge if they smoke in a nonsmoking room, said Mike Woitas, general manager of Country Inn & Suites in Albert Lea. What happens more often than not, Woitas said, is that the credit card companies will not cover the smoking room charges and the hotel is stuck with the cost.

Cleaning up after the smokers can be rather involved, because the hotel or motel may have to clean the drapes, carpets, blankets, comforters and replace the pillows, Woitas said.

Rep. John Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) questioned whether one could tell if someone had been smoking in a room without seeing them do it. Woitas said that besides the smell of smoke, there is usually evidence left behind such as ashes and cigarette butts.

SF2809, the companion bill sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— C. GREEN

HOUSING

Bonding flexibility for homeless

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency says it would have more flexibility to address long term homelessness needs under a bill laid

over Feb. 19 by the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division for possible inclusion in its bonding request.

HF2535, sponsored by Rep. John Benson (DFL-Minnetonka), would allow the agency to establish a nonprofit housing bond account within a housing development fund. The agency could then issue up to \$30 million of nonprofit bonds in one or more series to make loans and to finance construction and rehabilitation of permanent supportive housing.

The housing would be used for individuals or families who have been without a permanent residence for at least 12 months or at least four times in the last three years. It would also apply to those who are at significant risk of being without a permanent residence.

The bill is the last request for state money in the plan that began in 2003, to end long term homelessness, said Tonja Orr, agency assistant commissioner for housing policy. The money would fund about 200-350 housing units, she said.

The agency has used general obligation bonds to fund housing since 1990, but state constitutional guidelines require units to be owned by a public entity. Finding a willing and able entity to own public housing has been a struggle partly because of more costly legal fees and extra construction elements in projects, Orr said. The bill's financing mechanism will speed up development of affordable housing because nonprofits won't have to negotiate with local units of government, she said.

Orr said project allocations would be based on communities identifying a need and asking the agency for help.

A companion bill, SF2311, sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Housing priorities set

The House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division approved its \$32.5 million bonding request Feb. 20.

HF2734, sponsored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls), would appropriate \$30 million to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to finance loans and grants for publicly owned emergency shelters, temporary or transitional housing, permanent rental housing and rehabilitation costs to preserve public housing. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Also included in the bill is a \$2.5 million grant for a Hennepin County Opportunity Center that would provide a single site to connect the homeless with needed services. Formally introduced as HF3153, sponsored by Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), the center is part of the county's Heading Home

Hennepin 10-year plan to end homelessness.

The center would provide services such as housing, dental and medical in one location.

Another bill provision would require the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency to establish a working group to address the mortgage foreclosure crisis and submit recommendations to the Legislature by Jan. 1, 2009. The agency is to consider:

- the use of certain bonds to prevent residential mortgage foreclosures and to address the effects of them,
- means to make Community Activity Set Aside mortgages more accessible to neighborhood land trusts, and
- alternative tax classifications for neighborhood land trust properties to make taxation of properties more equitable and to provide an incentive for greater use of land trusts.

Jeff Washburne, director of City of Lakes Community Land Trust, said land trusts create ownership opportunities for low- to middle-income people through such means as financing management and resident training.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) said that bonding obligations could constrain future legislatures.

A Senate companion, SF2829, sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul) awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee. The Senate bill contains language only pertaining to land trusts.

— P. OSTBERG

HUMANITIES

Wildlife museum planned

Minnesota is home to nearly one-third of federal duck stamp competition winners, but they and other wildlife artists do not have a permanent place to showcase their work.

Sponsored by Rep. Connie Ruth (R-Owatonna), HF2891 seeks to change that.

Held over Feb. 18 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its bonding recommendations, the bill seeks \$1.25 million to help construct the Minnesota Wildlife Art Museum. “This would help create a permanent institution to exhibit, interpret and celebrate this art,” Ruth said.

The plans call for an addition of the Gainey Conference Center, which is owned by the University of St. Thomas, to house the museum. The university now delivers a master's program at the Owatonna center.

Last year, the university became aware that

several of Minnesota's top wildlife artists got their start as commercial artists at Jostens, Inc. in Owatonna, said Doug Hennes, the university's vice president for university and government relations.

"Jostens was run for several decades by Daniel C. Gainey, who left his estate to St. Thomas after his death in 1979," he said.

The university would cover half the construction costs and would pay for operating costs.

Hennes said the \$2.5 million museum would be a partnership between Steele County and the university. It would include temporary and permanent wildlife exhibits, as well as lectures, demonstrations and workshops directed at school-age children.

A companion bill SF2664, sponsored by Sen. Dick Day (R-Owatonna), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. COOK

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Memorial Day funding

A bill that would increase the amount of money counties are authorized to spend for Memorial Day observances got its first approval on President's Day, Feb. 18.

The House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee approved HF2599 and sent it to the House floor.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), would increase the amount a county board is authorized to spend on a Memorial Day observance to \$3,500. The new amount would be effective July 1, 2008, and mark the first increase since the amount was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000 in 1984.

Prior to the statutes being passed in 1911 and 1921, counties were not authorized to appropriate any money for Memorial Day exercises.

In addition, the bill would increase from \$100 to \$300 the amount a county board is authorized to appropriate to each post of a recognized military service persons' organization or society to help pay for Memorial Day exercises. This amount was last increased in 1979.

A companion bill, SF2463, sponsored by Sen. Jim Vickerman (DFL-Tracy), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— B. HOGENSON

RECREATION

More cold cash for ice needed

In 1995, the Legislature created the Mighty Ducks Ice Arena Grant Program.

The popularity of hockey had skyrocketed, especially among girls, and there didn't seem to be enough ice time for everyone who wanted to play. Communities across the state used the grants to build new sheets of ice or improve existing rinks, according to the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission.

On Feb. 18, the commission asked the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division to include a \$5 million request in its bonding request. The funds would resurrect the program, which had run out of money in 2000, said Paul Erickson, executive director of the commission. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's bonding recommendations.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), HF2541 would provide 14 grants for new arenas at \$250,000 each and 15 renovation grants at \$100,000, according to the commission.

The original program funded 61 new sheets of ice, matched by more than \$120 million in public and private funds, Atkins said.

Rep. Dave Olin (DFL-Thief River Falls) asked the committee to include bills, HF2211 and HF2605, to fund ice rinks in Badger and Hallock.

Erickson said Badger contacted the commission in 2002, after the Mighty Ducks program had run out of money. If the program is funded again, he said Badger would likely be eligible for a grant, even though the rink would be used mostly for figure skating, because the town is in Greater Minnesota.

A companion bill, SF2348, sponsored by Sen. Kathy Saltzman (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. Saltzman is a commission board member.

— C. BLANCHARD

SAFETY

Emergency preparedness dollars

In 1999, a task force report was presented to the House about fire and law enforcement training facilities. It stressed the need for safe, realistic emergency training and the value of coordinating with federal, state and local agencies.

Sponsored by Rep. Al Doty (DFL-Royalton), HF2730 proposes \$5 million for the design and construction of a homeland security and emergency management training and exercise center at Camp Ripley, near Little Falls.

Presented to the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 14, the bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an upcoming public safety bonding bill. The Senate companion, SF2487, sponsored by Sen. Paul Koering (R-Fort Ripley), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

A 53,000 acre, state-owned military training site, Camp Ripley has two aircraft runways, a control tower, an administrative and operations building, helicopter pads, an aircraft hanger and two crash fire rescue bays. Yet, even with these resources, availability is limited for civilian training because of the needs of the military.

Tim Leslie, assistant commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, said this would provide a regional facility where fire and police officials can receive valuable and consistent training for emergency situations. Preliminary plans include a simulated emergency operations center, collapsed structures and a fire hydrant system for a fully automated controlled simulated city.

Leslie also said that the next phase of the Camp Ripley project would include a 50-room dormitory, a cafeteria, burn tower and emergency vehicle driving course. It has a price tag of \$10.19 million, but another funding request will not be made until 2010.

— C. GREEN

Hands-free cell phone use

A plan would help ensure that drivers keep two hands on the wheel.

Sponsored by Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth), HF1822 would require that any cellular phone used while operating a motor vehicle be hands-free. Use is defined in the bill as "talking, text messaging or listening on a mobile telephone."

The House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee sent the bill without recommendation Feb. 20 to the House Transportation Finance Division. There is no Senate companion.

Supporters said the bill is all about safety.

Citing a medical journal, Jaros noted a report stating cell phone abuse while driving causes as many incidents as drunken driving.

"Convenience must come second to public safety," said Kenneth Zapp, an economics professor at Metropolitan State University, whose stepson was broadsided in 2000 by someone who ran a red light while talking on a cell phone.

"When we fly in an airplane, we all accept the fact we go through screening for public safety," he said. "It's inconvenient, but we need to do it. It's equally serious here."

Jaros hopes this bill becomes law quicker than another safety measure, but will have the same result.

"I remember about 20 years when we passed the seat belt law it took about six or eight years to do so," he said. "I didn't think it'd be as effective as it is." Minnesota usually ranks at or near the top in nationwide seat belt usage, including 83.3 percent in 2006.

However, like a seat belt offense, this would be a secondary offense, meaning the driver would need to be stopped for another moving violation.

A person would not be guilty of crime if the phone was used for contacting certain places in response to an emergency, such as calling 911, a doctor, ambulance, fire department or other law enforcement agency.

Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina) said the bill isn't clear if dialing a cell phone would be a violation. Jaros will try to clarify that by the bill's next stop.

— M. COOK

Dangerous dogs put on a short leash

Some dogs are more dangerous than others. But when dogs attack or bite, some believe the owner is responsible, while others believe it's just the nature of the dog.

Approved by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee Feb. 19, HF2906 would make changes to statute regarding dangerous dogs. Sponsored by Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), the bill next goes to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

The bill would require all dangerous dogs, as defined by statute, be sterilized, and that the owners notify the animal control authority within 30 days if the dog is transferred to a new location. The bill expands the circumstances under which a dangerous dog may be destroyed, but also states that animal control must provide the dog owner with the opportunity for a hearing.

Rep. John Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) proposed an amendment repealing a statute prohibiting municipalities from banning specific dog breeds. He referenced studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and from Merritt Clifton, editor of *Animal People*, arguing that certain dogs were disproportionately responsible for deaths and injuries.

"When you have animals that attack this much, and effect this much injury and death, we have to take this into consideration," he said.

Lesch also proposed labeling five dog breeds — pit bull, rottweiler, akita, chow chow, and wolf hybrid — as potentially dangerous.

"Dogs are gonna bite; we're not trying to ban dog bites," Lesch said. "It's the severe attacks, maulings and deaths that we're trying to prevent."

Bill Forbes, secretary and treasurer of the Minnesota Animal Control Association, disagreed. Forbes said since the findings of the Clifton report have not appeared in a professional publication, he did not put much stock in them. He also said that several national and state animal organizations are

MODEL LEGISLATORS



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

"Governor" Wenonah Echelard, right, and "Lt. Governor" Leah Mueller from Winona Senior High School, talk about their experience as Model Legislature students during a Winona Model Legislature technology demonstration at the Feb. 19 hearing of the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

against any breed-specific legislation, and recent scientific reports have shown that areas where bans have gone into place have had little or no positive impact.

Neither amendment was adopted.

The companion bill, SF2876, sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), next goes before the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— C. GREEN

Response relief plan laid out

A framework for state agencies to use in responding to a natural disaster that qualifies for a presidential disaster declaration may be created.

HF2904, sponsored by Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona), was approved Feb. 20 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee and referred to the House Finance Committee.

Pelowski said that throughout Minnesota's 150 years of statehood, a statutory framework or policy for responding to natural disasters has been lacking, leading to a piece-by-piece response.

"There has been no statutory reference," Pelowski said. "What we have done, frankly with the best of intentions, (the result) has been less than adequate."

The bill provides a framework for responding when a presidential disaster declaration has been issued. Appropriations to implement

the bill must be made in law after a disaster has been declared. The bill specifies that state assistance is not for disaster-related costs that are eligible for federal aid, private insurance coverage or other reimbursement.

Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague) pointed out the challenges natural disasters pose for smaller communities.

"There are a lot of smaller communities that, whether it has risen to a presidential level or not, obviously have difficulty managing the challenge brought forward by specific disasters," Brod said, using the 2006 tornado outbreak in Le Sueur County as an example.

Pelowski responded by saying the bill will still provide a statutory base for those situations.

"We took the level of a presidential declaration because we needed a base. If there is a disaster that does not warrant a presidential declaration you can look at this statutory language and you can use it disaster by disaster," Pelowski said.

"I think it's smart and I can't believe we haven't done this before," said Rep. Sarah Anderson, (R-Plymouth).

Pelowski stressed that he has worked with Gov. Tim Pawlenty's office on the bill and anticipates the governor's support.

A companion bill SF2607, sponsored by Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— B. HOGENSON

Humane treatment in pet businesses

Puppies and kittens: they're cute and cuddly; they're also part of a growing business.

Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls) told the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee that Minnesota is one of the top states for mass-produced dogs and cats. The animals often live in overcrowded wire cages stacked on top of one another, where waste can go from one cage to the cage below.

HF2469, known as the Dog and Cat Breeders Act, would provide state licensing and inspection procedures, additional standards of care, and administrative and criminal penalties for dog and cat breeders.

Sponsored by Hornstein, the bill was approved by the committee Feb. 19 and is headed to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Hornstein said disease and parasites are common among pets purchased from cat and dog breeders, and the problems are sometimes passed onto their new owners.

"This is not only a question of humane treatment of animals; it's also a consumer protection bill," he said.

Keith Streff, director of humane investigations with the Animal Humane Society, said current federal regulations are inadequate, and there are no state laws for dog and cat breeding. In his 23 years in the industry, Streff said, he has never seen or participated in a federal intervention dealing with breeding, no matter how abhorrent the conditions.

Although she has seen the conditions of some of the breeding facilities, and hopes for the day when the current situation ends, Linda Wolf does not support the bill. Wolf, a veterinarian for more than 20 years, said that the bill too specifically targets the smaller breeders and excludes the largest wholesale breeders from the restrictions.

Robert Weise, president of the Minnesota Pet Breeders Association, said there are already laws on the books to protect the animals and that additional regulation won't protect the dogs.

The Senate companion, SF2292, sponsored by Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— C. GREEN

Protection order delivery

An applicant for an Order for Protection should not have to stalk their stalker just so papers can be served. Sponsored by Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph), HF1625 would offer assistance. It would allow a restraining or harassment order to be served in an alternative

way, such as to a place where the perpetrator works, their parents' address or that of other nearby relatives.

The bill was approved Feb. 15 by the House Crime Victims Subcommittee and referred to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee. It has no Senate companion.

Hosch cited an example of Jennifer, a woman in his district who had an abusive relationship with the father of her first child. "She has had four Orders for Protection against him. He has violated that order over 40 times. Since their separation, he has not physically harmed her; however, he has continually harassed her, her employer and her children. At this time she is trying to have a fifth harassment order against him, but because she cannot find him, she has not been able to serve him."

Hosch said 13 other states have similar laws, including Florida, Washington and California.

"I drove through the neighborhoods and previous employment sites that he used to be at in the hopes that I could give the police information on where to serve him at," Jennifer wrote.

In cases where more than one restraining order has been filed, the perpetrator would be required to provide the home and employment addresses, as well as the names and locations of their parents, siblings, children or other relatives.

The bill would also provide a way for the petitioner to ask for reprieve from a permanent order after five years by providing to the court that circumstances have changed.

— M. COOK

TAXES

Increase for public utilities proposed

The House Taxes Committee approved the omnibus tax bill Feb. 20.

Sponsored by Chairwoman Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), HF3201 includes a provision that is causing speculation about whether the governor will veto the bill.

The provision in question would increase property taxes on public utilities. After the department concluded that the value of the utility properties was lower than previously determined, it changed the rules and dramatically lowered property taxes collected by local governments where the utility companies are located.

Supporters of the provision say the revenue lost by the rule change is too large for cities to endure. Representatives from the utility industry say it's unfair that they were "overcharged" only to have taxes raised near previous levels.

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said that neither his department nor the governor supports the class-rate increases. He said the provision was one of four outlined by the governor in last year's veto message, and though he said he couldn't speak for the governor, he speculated that it could result in another veto.

The committee voted against an amendment by Rep. Dean Simpson (R-Perham) that would have excluded the provision.

The omnibus tax bill is scheduled to be heard Feb. 22 in the House Ways and Means Committee. If approved, it will go to the House floor.

— C. BLANCHARD

TOURISM

Cash for choo-choo tracks

Promising that he won't be back for another 40 years if the request is granted, the president of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad asked the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division to include \$450,000 in its bonding bill to fix up tracks.

The railroad's president, Andrew Webb, asked the division Feb. 18 for help to upgrade the remaining 5 miles of the 138-year-old track just outside Duluth. No action was taken on the bill, HF2703, sponsored by Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth), the division chairman. There is no Senate companion.

The railroad, a nonprofit, run by volunteers, must conform to federal operating standards even though it's a tourist route, Webb said. The organization needs the money to buy and install 2,000 new railway ties, because only seven of the group's 22 volunteers are "able-bodied" enough to pound a railroad spike into the ground, he said.

"A properly installed railroad tie will last somewhere between 40 and 50 years, so don't expect us to see us back in the next 40 years," Webb said.

The original railroad was a land grant railroad, the first to connect Duluth to St. Paul, dedicated by the Legislature in 1863. The Civil War delayed construction until 1865, and the tracks reached Duluth five years later. By 1970, competition from more powerful trains had long since forced the company out of business and only 5 miles of tracks remained, Webb said.

Local efforts transformed the track into a scenic route near the St. Louis River, using historic coaches from the 1900s, Webb said. He added that the group has operated the railway for almost 30 years without subsidies from state or local government.

"We try to recreate train travel as it was in the 1870s and 1880s," he said. "It's a labor of love."

— C. BLANCHARD

TRANSPORTATION

More physically disabled plates

People who are physically disabled might be able to travel around more easily and with less hassle.

Sponsored by Rep. Lyndon Carlson (DFL-Crystal), HF2408 would permit someone to receive up to two sets of disability license plates for their motor vehicles.

The bill was approved Feb. 20 by the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee and sent to the House Transportation Finance Division.

Carlson said current law allows a qualifying individual to receive up to two disability placards or one set of disability plates and one placard.

That can be problematic when an individual drives or rides in a vehicle without disability plates and also forgets their placard.

Carlson said the bill was brought to his attention by a man who works in a parking ramp at North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale. He said people talk to him almost daily because they are tagged for not having their placard visible in the vehicle.

"He thought, and I concurred, that an easy solution would be to allow them to have two sets of license plates, and then they wouldn't have to worry about moving the placard from one car to the other or forgetting to display it, which sometimes happen," Carlson said.

Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston) wants to ensure that someone with a temporary disability could not get plates for the year, when they are only needed for few months.

"Unless this is specific to someone with a permanent disability, you could have people that should get a temporary placard getting a full-year plate," he said. "Are we going to recreate the problem we had before when the disability community came in and were complaining that they were being usurped by people who weren't disabled?"

A companion bill (SF2204), sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

— M. COOK

MnDOT examination raises concerns

A legislative auditor's report offered mixed news for the Department of Transportation.

Released Feb. 19, "State Highways and Bridges" shows that trunk highway pavement

conditions have worsened and are expected to do so further. However, it also indicates overall trunk highway bridge conditions have improved.

"There are a few bright spots, but the overall picture is not good," said Legislative Auditor James Nobles. "Parts of the report are downright grim."

The biggest problem is a decrease in state funding.

Historically, according to the report, the state has relied on transportation taxes to fund the trunk highway system, but tax receipts have not kept pace with inflation. These taxes now account for about half of trunk highway resources, compared to about two-thirds of those resources in 1998. Since 2003, the state has made substantial use of debt financing techniques to support the state trunk highway system.

"When adjusted for inflation, trunk highway funding in fiscal year 1998 totaled \$1.4 billion. In the years since, inflation-adjusted funding reached a peak of \$1.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2003, then decreased to \$1.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2007, a 16 percent decline," the report states.

The report was released two days before the House and Senate were expected to vote on a transportation bill that would raise an estimated \$7.8 billion in the next decade through a gas tax increase, sales tax increase and other fee increases.

MnDOT has a preservation-first policy, and department officials estimate \$672 million per year will be needed between 2012 and 2018 for preservation purposes. Yearly department revenues for that period are forecasted between \$635 million and \$700 million annually.

In recent years the department has strayed from that policy. According to the report, more than half of trunk highway construction spending since 2002 has gone toward system expansion. In Fiscal Year 2001, only 25 percent of allocated revenue was spent on expansion. The department predicts by 2011 there will be twice as many trunk highway miles in poor condition compared to 2007.

"The trends of flattening transportation revenues, quickly rising construction costs and an aging system make it clear that more of the state's transportation resources must be invested in maintenance and preservation of our existing system," said Transportation Commissioner/Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau.

The report also shows that MnDOT is good at completing high-priority bridge repairs, but is falling behind on routine maintenance.

Still, between 2002 and 2007, the percentage of bridge decks areas in good condition has

increased by 4 percent on principal arterials to 55 percent, which is the department target, and to about 60 percent on non-principal roads, 10 percentage points above target.

However, the road quality index used by the department shows that about 66 percent of principal roads were in good condition last year, 6 percent lower than five years prior.

The full report is available at <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2008/trunkhwy.htm>.

— M. COOK

VETERANS

Communities bid for new vets homes

Several communities are seeking state help in funding new veterans homes or additions to existing facilities, but the request from the City of Montevideo is unique because no bonding money would be needed to build the facility.

Project advocates told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 15 the home would complement the Veterans Community Outbased Clinic, built in 2002 through a partnership with Chippewa County. Land has already been secured, and Montevideo Mayor Jim Curtiss said the community is committed to paying both the local and state share of the construction costs.

Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-Clara City) sponsors HF2664, which asks the state to provide funds for the home's operation. The local contribution would be used to solicit the two-thirds federal matching funds also needed to develop the home.

Approved by the division, the bill now moves to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

Gilbert Acevedo, state Department of Veterans Affairs' deputy commissioner, said requests for new homes are prioritized by health and safety needs. "Also, there are a number of beds allocated to each state, and that amount is based on the population of veterans in the state," he said, admitting he is unsure whether the state has any unused bed-capacity at this time. Any new home would have to be located at least two hours away "by land," from another veterans home.

The Senate companion, SF2407, sponsored by Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Communities seeking state money to expand current homes or build new ones include: Brainerd, Sauk Centre, Willmar, Fergus Falls and Hastings.

— L. SCHUTZ

Monday, Feb. 18

HF3018-Gunther (R) **Finance**

Fairmont; Winnebago Avenue Sports Complex funding provided.

HF3019-Nornes (R) **Transportation Finance Division** Highway right-of-way transferred to state rail bank relating to specified tracts.

HF3020-Gunther (R) **Finance** Martin County Community Center funding provided.

HF3021-Juhnke (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Rice Memorial Hospital in Willmar; departments included in privatized public employee retirement coverage.

HF3022-Juhnke (DFL) **Finance** Independent School District No. 347, Willmar, school site minimum acreage requirement waived.

HF3023-Simon (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Judicial vacancy procedures established and modified, judicial performance commission and appellate judicial selection commission created, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF3024-Tschumper (DFL) **Taxes** Property tax class 4c requirements modified.

HF3025-Tschumper (DFL) **Finance** Peterson wastewater treatment facility funding provided.

HF3026-Fritz (DFL) **Finance** Highway signs for deaf and blind state academies required.

HF3027-Wollschlager (DFL) **Finance** Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical, Red Wing; asset preservation funding provided.

HF3028-Wollschlager (DFL) **Finance** Red Wing wastewater infrastructure grant provided.

HF3029-Hilstrom (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Employers authorized to offer alternative deferred compensation plans.

HF3030-Morgan (DFL) **Taxes** Two-wheel motorized vehicles exempted from metropolitan county wheelage tax.

HF3031-Olin (DFL) **Finance** Middle River wastewater treatment lagoons funding provided.

HF3032-Dill (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources** Critical habitat private sector matching account modified; outdoor recreation system composition extended to include aquatic management areas; state parks, forests and recreation areas modified; and state land conveyances and authorized.

HF3033-Tschumper (DFL) **Finance** Fountain sewer system expansion and improvement funding provided.

HF3034-Mahoney (DFL) **Commerce & Labor** Electrical, plumbing, water conditioning, boiler and high-pressure piping professional provisions modified.

HF3035-Hackbarth (R) **Environment & Natural Resources** Hunters', Anglers' and Trappers' Bill of Rights adopted establishing and protecting specified rights; dedicating a portion of the sales tax on hunting and fishing supplies to game and fish purposes; and proposing constitutional amendments.

HF3036-Sailer (DFL) **Finance** Non-motorized transportation advisory committee established.

HF3037-Heidgerken (R) **Taxes** School district referendum market value tax base and seasonal recreational property tax modified.

HF3038-Ward (DFL) **Finance** Central Lakes College asset preservation and capital improvements funding provided.

HF3039-Loeffler (DFL) **Finance** Minneapolis; Father Hennepin Regional Park improvements funding provided.

HF3040-Peterson, S. (DFL) **Health & Human Services** Human services residential program sitting provisions modified.

HF3041-Murphy, M. (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Retirement provisions modified relating to actuarial and financial reporting.

HF3042-Murphy, E. (DFL) **Health & Human Services** Direct care registered nurse hospital staffing levels required.

HF3043-Hackbarth (R) **Environment & Natural Resources** Nighttime raccoon hunting hours modified.

HF3044-Ruud (DFL) **Health & Human Services** Mental health rehabilitation workers qualifications modified.

HF3045-Hansen (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Presidential primary election provided.

HF3046-Brod (R) **Finance** Le Sueur County; Lake Washington Park capital improvements funding provided.

HF3047-Tschumper (DFL) **Finance** Whalan unsewered collection and treatment project funding provided.

HF3048-Tschumper (DFL) **Finance** La Crescent wastewater treatment system funding provided.

HF3049-Moe (DFL) **Finance** Deer River Wastewater Treatment Facility renovation funding provided.

HF3050-Olin (DFL) **Finance** Greater Minnesota business development funding provided.

HF3051-Emmer (R) **E-12 Education** Public employer discretion provided relating to leaves of absence longer than one year for teacher representatives.

HF3052-Emmer (R) **Finance** Rockford flood hazard mitigation funding provided.

HF3053-McNamara (R) **Finance** Vermilion Highlands Wildlife Management Area land acquisition funding provided.

HF3054-Morrow (DFL) **Transportation Finance Division** Legislative Route Nos. 295 and 335 removed from the state highway system.

HF3055-Solberg (DFL) **Finance** State agencies deficiency funding provided.

HF3056-Hosch (DFL) **Finance** Richmond sewer service extension funding provided.

HF3057-Dill (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources** All-terrain vehicle youth operation requirements modified.

HF3058-Tschumper (DFL) **Finance** Brownsville wastewater infrastructure grant provided.

HF3059-Smith (R) **Public Safety & Civil Justice** Sex trafficking established as a separate crime from the promotion of prostitution, and aggravated forgery crime penalties increased.

HF3060-Fritz (DFL) **Finance** State hospital or regional treatment centers deceased residents grave markers funding provided.

HF3061-Hilstrom (DFL) **Health & Human Services** MinnesotaCare prohibited for specified detainees.

HF3062-Scalze (DFL) **Finance** Outdoor traditions investment funding provided for environment & natural resources purposes.

HF3063-Nornes (R) **Taxes** Fergus Falls; income tax credit provided for historic structure rehabilitation expenditures.

HF3064-Nornes (R) **Taxes** Fergus Falls historical zone property tax exemption provided.

HF3065-Laine (DFL) **Finance** Anoka County; Banfill Locke Center for the Arts funding provided.

HF3066-Laine (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections** Precinct caucus dates established by the appropriate political parties, notice to secretary of state required.

HF3067-Swails (DFL) **Finance** Century College science lab renovation funding provided.

HF3068-Dill (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources** Snowmobile registration and sticker expiration date provided, temporary permit effective period extended for snowmobiles, off-highway motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and watercraft, and temporary permit information requirements modified.

HF3069-Dill (DFL)**Finance**

St. Louis County; Pike River dam engineering and repair funding provided.

HF3070-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Kensington Area Historical Society funding provided.

HF3071-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul youth drop-in center funding provided.

HF3072-Laine (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

County-based purchasing law amended.

HF3073-Faust (DFL)**Finance**

Sandstone; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3074-Faust (DFL)**Finance**

Pine City; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3075-Moe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Beltrami County; private sale of tax-forfeited land bordering public water authorized.

HF3076-Demmer (R)**Finance**

Oronoco; West Frontage Road funding provided.

HF3077-Beard (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Occupational licenses provided.

HF3078-Westrom (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Students enrolled in college or high school under the age of 22 authorized to spear fish without a license between Dec. 26 and Dec. 31 annually.

HF3079-Westrom (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Fish spearing earlier open season authorized.

HF3080-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Lansing Township; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3081-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Nicolville; wastewater infrastructure funding authorized.

HF3082-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Correctional state employees retirement plan amended, and two employment positions added to retirement plan coverage.

HF3083-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Building contractor requirement that homeowner's notice of construction defect be in writing eliminated.

HF3084-Scalze (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Homeowners provided with a longer period within which to notify contractors of construction defects.

HF3085-Laine (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Construction warranties requirement modified, and waivers of the warranty prohibited.

HF3086-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Austin; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3087-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Racine; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3088-Poppe (DFL)**Finance**

Lansing Township; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3089-Ruth (R)**Transportation Finance Division**

Temporary permit use allowed while awaiting delivery of license plates.

HF3090-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Department of Transportation position provisions modified.

HF3091-Gardner (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Homeowners permitted to recover all damages incurred due to faulty construction.

HF3092-Madore (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Residential building contractor investigations discontinuance prohibited.

HF3093-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Building standards definition amended.

HF3094-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

Ramsey County; Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare renovation funding provided.

HF3095-Simon (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Equitable compensation limits modified, and state commissioner salary caps modified.

HF3096-Tingelstad (R)**Finance**

Public land and buildings funding provided.

HF3097-Heidgerken (R)**Finance**

New Munich; wastewater treatment plant funding provided.

HF3098-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Richfield; All Veterans Memorial funding provided.

HF3099-Kalin (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Emergency management training required for executive branch employees.

HF3100-Heidgerken (R)**Finance**

St. Martin; wastewater rehabilitation and expansion funding provided.

HF3101-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Domestic abuse no contact order violations criminal penalty increased.

HF3102-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Domestic and child abuse previous incidents definitions provided, and predicate crimes list expanded.

HF3103-Peterson, N. (R)**Finance**

Normandale Community College classroom addition and renovation funding provided.

HF3104-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Lease levy funding limit removed.

HF3105-Zellers (R)**Finance**

Highway 610 funding provided.

HF3106-Morrow (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Ethanol plant expansion discretionary environmental impact statements provision provided.

HF3107-Moe (DFL)**Finance**

Operating referendum revenue authority repealed for fiscal years 2010 and later.

HF3108-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Inflationary adjustment limitation removed.

HF3109-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Alternative teacher compensation revenue inflationary adjustment added.

HF3110-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Referendum allowance limit eliminated.

HF3111-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

Location equity index created, general education revenue formula modified and school district revenue increased.

HF3112-Sertich (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Statewide health insurance pool created for school district employees.

HF3113-Hortman (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State budget requirements modified.

HF3114-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Park district property acquisition provision provided.

HF3115-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

First party good faith insurance practices regulated, and remedies provided.

HF3116-Tschumper (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Historical Society funding provided for southeastern Minnesota flood damage.

HF3117-McNamara (R)**Rules & Legislative Administration**

Legislative employee commuting reduction provision provided.

HF3118-Tschumper (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 239, Rushford-Peterson; cooperative facility grant provided, timelines waived.

HF3119-Howes (R)**Taxes**

Propane-fueled school vehicle purchases exemption provided.

HF3120-Paymar (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax credit provided to employers that employ persons with criminal records.

HF3121-Westrom (R)**Finance**

University of Minnesota-Morris; community services building funding provided.

HF3122-Scalze (DFL)**Finance**

Metropolitan Council funding provided.

HF3123-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

State hospitals and regional treatment centers funding provided for grave markers and memorial monuments for deceased residents.

HF3124-Juhnke (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Coffee shop qualification clarified in determining eligibility for specific service signs.

HF3125-Simon (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Uniform Probate Code provisions changed.

HF3126-Ruth (R)**Finance**

Tax registration for intra-city buses fixed.

HF3127-Ruth (R)**Finance**

Wind energy production tax removed from county apportionment deduction for school districts.

HF3128-Brod (R)
Transportation Finance Division
New Prague; Deputy registrar office location permitted to be within city limits.

HF3129-Marquart (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Plat requirements modified.

HF3130-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Child Care Advisory Task Force established, and report required.

HF3131-Walker (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
June/teenth state holiday established.

HF3132-Mullery (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Animal fighting provisions changed.

HF3133-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Social Security number requirement eliminated in marriage dissolution petitions.

HF3134-Thissen (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Death deed conveyance of interests in real property by transfer provision provided, acknowledgments made in a representative capacity clarified, registered land application clarified, obsolete language eliminated and technical changes made.

HF3135-Scalze (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Local impact notes requirements changed.

HF3136-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Constitutional amendment proposed for providing education for young children through age 5.

HF3137-Sailer (DFL)
Taxes
Income or franchise tax credit provided for installation of solar thermal equipment.

HF3138-Bigham (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
State labor contracts ratified.

HF3139-Tschumper (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence certification recognized, drug use limited, requirements changed and prescription of drugs regulated.

HF3140-Westrom (R)
Finance
Postsecondary enrollment options program modified.

HF3141-Solberg (DFL)
Taxes
Sales tax exemption expanded for public safety radio communication products.

HF3142-Winkler (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
State Board of Investment encouraged to make certain of its venture capital investments in Minnesota businesses, and report required.

HF3143-Winkler (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Individual income and corporate franchise credit allowed for investment in Minnesota high technology businesses and appropriation reduced.

HF3144-Winkler (DFL)
Biosciences & Emerging Technology
Jurisdiction limitation provided to tax persons investing in certain entities.

HF3145-Severson (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Historic farm machinery operation licensing requirements modified.

HF3146-Hilstrom (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Social Security number collection and use restrictions modified.

HF3147-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Working group created to study access to emergency mental health services.

HF3148-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Bottled Water Right-to-Know-Act established, and labeling requirements for bottle water added.

HF3149-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Tax provisions, government data practices, and debt collection provisions modified; and job opportunity building zone requirements compliance provided.

HF3150-Norton (DFL)
Finance
Small business development assistance provided.

HF3151-Norton (DFL)
Finance
Rochester: Lifetrack Resources pilot project funding provided.

HF3152-Knuth (DFL)
Finance
New Brighton; environmental remediation and installation of a gas collection system funds provided.

HF3153-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Hennepin County; Opportunity Center funding provided.

HF3154-Knuth (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Safe Cosmetics Act established, cancer causing ingredients disclosure required for manufacturers of cosmetics.

HF3155-Madore (DFL)
Finance
Transit improvement area program accounts established.

HF3156-Brynaert (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Ventilator-dependent nursing facility residents payment rate modified.

HF3157-Peterson, A. (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Big Stone County; county treasurer duty assignment authorized.

HF3158-Slawik (DFL)
Taxes
Oakdale; extended duration limits authorized for certain redevelopment tax increment financing districts.

HF3159-Slawik (DFL)
Health & Human Services
MinnesotaCare exception provided to four-month uninsured requirement.

HF3160-Haws (DFL)
Taxes
Tax-forfeited land proceeds apportionment provided for special assessment to governmental subdivision.

HF3161-Bigham (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Minnesota deceased military personnel current listing provided.

HF3162-Jaros (DFL)
Taxes
Duluth; tax increment financing districts time extension provided.

HF3163-Atkins (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Construction debris and residue prohibited as cover material at disposal facilities.

HF3164-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Presidential primary election allowed as determined by each major political party, precinct caucus dates in non-presidential election years permitted to each party, and caucuses required to be held on first date as other states in region.

HF3165-Hortman (DFL)
Finance
National Sports Center funding provided.

HF3166-Hausman (DFL)
Finance
University of Minnesota; biomedical science research facilities funding program established.

HF3167-Johnson (DFL)
Finance
Senior nutrition funding clarification provided.

HF3168-Wagenius (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Conservation easement management account established, contribution to the account and purpose statement required for future conservation easements.

HF3169-Drazkowski (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Wabasha County; wildlife management area lands sale authorized.

HF3170-Scalze (DFL)
Taxes
Lawful gambling organizations refund provided for lawful purpose expenditures.

HF3171-Lenczewski (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Lobbying prohibited by former legislators, constitutional officers, agency heads and certain legislative employees for one year after leaving office.

HF3172-Pelowski (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Special election and primary provisions changed.

HF3173-Winkler (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Post-election review procedures changed.

HF3174-Kahn (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Public Radio digital conversion funding provided.

HF3175-Benson (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Attempted robbery penalty increased, robbery involving a motor vehicle crime created.

HF3176-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Minneapolis; Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway funding provided.

HF3177-Simpson (R)
Taxes
Wind power generator installation tax credit provided.

HF3178-Sailer (DFL)
Finance
K-12 public school funding provided for renewable energy projects.

HF3179-Magnus (R)
Finance
Minnesota River Basin floodplain management funding provided.

HF3180-Atkins (DFL)
Finance
St. Paul Regional Amateur Sports Facility funding provided.

HF3181-Benson (DFL)
E-12 Education

Education provisions clarified, amended and repealed, and state and district reporting systems analyzed.

HF3182-McFarlane (R)
Finance

Century College funding provided.

HF3183-Bunn (DFL)
Finance

Century College renovation funding provided.

HF3184-Sailer (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement name correction provided.

HF3185-Gardner (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Hospice services covered under general assistance medical care.

HF3186-Nelson (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Explore Minnesota Tourism director added to definition of public official.

HF3187-Anzelc (DFL)
Finance
Bovey; wastewater infrastructure funding provided.

HF3188-Magnus (R)
Finance
Independent School District No. 671, Hills-Beaver Creek; disability access account funds transfer authorized to undesignated general fund.

HF3189-Urdahl (R)
Finance
Minnesota Historical Society funding provided.

HF3190-Hilstrom (DFL)
E-12 Education
Health and safety revenue allowable criteria set.

HF3191-Erickson (R)
Health & Human Services
Outreach requirements eliminated for school districts.

HF3192-Brod (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Violent crimes committed in school zones sentences enhanced.

HF3193-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Early childhood family education collaboration incentive created.

HF3194-Nornes (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Fergus Falls; special care unit funding authorized for the state veterans home.

HF3195-Knuth (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Greenhouse gas emissions cap and trade program principles established, climate trust fund established and its goals and uses specified, studies required.

HF3196-Clark (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Commissioner of public safety's annual report on human trafficking required to include information on trafficking of American Indian women and girls.

HF3197-Fritz (DFL)
Finance
Child care licensure requirement modified.

HF3198-Tschumper (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Voluntary statewide pool established to provide health benefits to eligible members, administration and oversight of pool provided.

HF3199-Loeffler (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Minnesota supplemental aid shelter needy provisions modified to include persons moving out of corporate foster settings.

HF3200-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Internal Revenue Code conforming changes made, tuition and teacher expense additions provided, contractor withholdings required, income tax brackets index temporarily modified, non-resident income assigned to this state and report required.

HF3201-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Tax policy and administration provisions modified relating to income, franchise, property, sales and other taxes.

Tuesday, Feb. 19

HF3202-Faust (DFL)
E-12 Education
School districts and charter schools Internet2 opportunities provided for advanced research and education applications.

HF3203-Dominguez (DFL)
E-12 Education
Integration revenue program modified, goals strengthened, Department of Education program oversight increased and integration revenue increased for certain districts.

HF3204-Cornish (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Vehicle window glazing restriction exemptions provided.

HF3205-Mahoney (DFL)
Finance
Pine Island Economic Development Authority utility upgrade and extension grant provided for bioscience research park and integrated medicine facility.

HF3206-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
School technology permanent funding source created, and fund endowment income distribution modified.

HF3207-Gardner (DFL)
Finance
Century College asset preservation funding provided.

HF3208-Lanning (R)
Finance
Community action grants provided.

HF3209-Anderson, B. (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
State poem designated.

HF3210-Anderson, B. (R)
Health & Human Services
Substance abuse treatment annual effectiveness report mandated.

HF3211-Koenen (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Trunk highway statewide snow removal standards required, trunk highway closures limited, flashing lights prohibited, civil damages limited for rescue and barricade passing crime reclassified as petty misdemeanor.

HF3212-Johnson (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Video programming arbitration provided, and rulemaking required.

HF3213-Mullery (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Hennepin County; housing and redevelopment authority clarified.

HF3214-Severson (R)
Taxes
Military survivor benefit payment subtraction allowed.

HF3215-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Flensburg; sewer pipes funding provided.

HF3216-Shimanski (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
County Memorial Day expense increase authorized.

HF3217-Shimanski (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
False police and fire emergency calls included as misdemeanor offense.

HF3218-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Child support collection service fees required to be paid by obligor.

HF3219-Brynaert (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Ammunition restrictions modified.

HF3220-Davnie (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Nonprofit organization grants authorized by political subdivisions.

HF3221-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota State Retirement System deferred compensation plan provisions amended.

HF3222-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Medical assistance preferred drug list amended, asset transfers clarified, cause of action created, lien provisions changed, children's pilot program modified, statewide health information exchange established and estate claims allowed.

HF3223-Mahoney (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota State Retirement System coverage provisions amended, and technical changes made.

HF3224-Gunther (R)
Commerce & Labor
Boiler operation licensing procedures changed, and rulemaking authorized.

HF3225-Fritz (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Medford; Local sales and use tax authorized.

HF3226-Laine (DFL)
Finance
Columbia Heights; Pedestrian bridge funding provided.

HF3227-Anzelc (DFL)
Finance
Private forest land easement acquisition funding provided.

HF3228-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Critical public service property trespassing provisions modified.

HF3229-Nelson (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Water utility notice required when customer's heat source disconnected.

HF3230-Drazkowski (R)
Finance
Flood disaster appropriation purposes amended.

HF3231-Lesch (DFL)
Finance
Homeless outreach grants provided.

HF3232-Bunn (DFL)
Finance
Washington County Landfill funding provided.

HF3233-Seifert (R)
Taxes
Health insurance expenses income tax credit provided.

HF3234-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Law enforcement vehicle recording transcript pretrial prerequisite eliminated.

HF3235-Wollschlaeger (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Department of Human Services Background Studies Act modified.

HF3236-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Deed, rates of interest and mortgage contracts regulated, borrower's ability to repay verification provided, and mortgage broker's failure to comply penalties and remedies provided.

HF3237-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

St. Louis: sewer and water extension funding provided.

HF3238-Gardner (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Sustainable water use provided; conservation rate structures, drinking water emergency ordinance, and information sharing required, Pollution Control Agency ombudsman created, fees increased and conservation pricing required.

HF3239-Dittrich (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

State park permits issuance and reduced fees provisions provided to certain disabled persons.

HF3240-Dominguez (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Mexican-American veterans plaque placement authorized in the court of honor on the Capitol grounds.

HF3241-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

University of Minnesota-Duluth; civil engineering addition funding provided.

HF3242-Peppin (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Maple Grove; firefighter prior service credit transfer authorized.

HF3243-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare health coverage eligibility definition modified.

HF3244-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act enacted.

HF3245-Ozment (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Dangerous dog obedience training required, and task force provided.

HF3246-Winkler (DFL)**Finance**

Adult basic education aid modified.

HF3247-Thao (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Dental hygiene advanced practitioner level established.

HF3248-Scalze (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Municipalities authorized to establish street improvement districts and apportion street improvement fees within districts, street improvement plan adoption required and collection of fees authorized.

HF3249-Eken (DFL)**Finance**

Red River flood damage reduction projects funding provided.

HF3250-Anzelc (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Itasca County; tax-forfeited land lease proceed disposition provided, and private sale of tax-forfeited land bordering public water authorized.

HF3251-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Psychologists' scope of practice changed.

HF3252-Solberg (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Financial responsibility modified for out-of-state children.

HF3253-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families maintenance of effort programs modified.

Wednesday, Feb. 20**HF3254-Solberg (DFL)****Health & Human Services**

Health professional educational loan forgiveness program provisions changed, and dental care access services expanded.

HF3255-Benson (DFL)**Finance**

School reimbursement increased for the school milk program.

HF3256-Madore (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Zoological Garden funding appropriated.

HF3257-Loeffler (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Sexual offenders facing civil commitment allowed to choose to be confined in correctional facilities while petition is adjudicated, civil commitment cost addressed and county attorney access to data addressed.

HF3258-Lieder (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Marshall County; tax-forfeited land bordering public water sale authorized.

HF3259-Dettmer (R)**Health & Human Services**

Adult foster care and family adult day service provisions changed.

HF3260-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Lease levy amount increased.

HF3261-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

All Wars Memorial at Sheridan Memorial Park funding provided.

HF3262-Brynaert (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Alternative school start date provided for 2009 and 2010.

HF3263-Clark (DFL)**E-12 Education**

American Indian tribes contributions and communities instruction integrated into teacher preparation and licensing requirements.

HF3264-Hilstrom (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Non-state client employees authorized to work for community-based treatment and habilitation programs.

HF3265-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Radiation therapy facility construction moratorium extended in specified counties.

HF3266-Hamilton (R)**Finance**

Windom fire hall funding provided.

HF3267-Hamilton (R)**Finance**

Mountain Lake fire and ambulance facility construction funding provided.

HF3268-Hamilton (R)**Finance**

Worthington fire hall funding provided.

HF3269-Kahn (DFL)**Finance**

Association of Minnesota Public Education Radio Stations funding provided to assist with the conversion to digital broadcast signal.

HF3270-Walker (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Intermediate care facilities provider cost of living adjustments modified.

HF3271-Ward (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Pickup trucks defined to include mini trucks that meet emissions and safety standards for purposes of registration, taxation and operation.

HF3272-Sertich (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

St. Louis County off-sale liquor license authorized.

HF3273-Eken (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources; monument designation authority, state park names and park permit requirements modified; finance report requirements eliminated; and technical corrections provided.

HF3274-Carlson (DFL)**Finance**

Bottineau Transitway Corridor alternatives analysis, draft environmental impact study and property acquisition funding provided.

HF3275-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Master bear guide license established and rule making required.

HF3276-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Portable bear stands allowed to be left overnight in wildlife management areas.

HF3277-Howes (R)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections**

Minnesota State Retirement System; Correctional caseworker prior employment recategorized as covered correctional service, and past service credit transfer authorized from general state employees retirement plan.

HF3278-Westrom (R)**Finance**

Lobster Lake; Central Lakes Region Sanitary Board funding authorized.

HF3279-Erickson (R)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Wetland restoration order drafts allowed by local government units, and Board of Water and Soil Resources directed to amend rules.

HF3280-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Public land expedited exchanges provided.

HF3281-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Snowmobile safety certificate age requirement exemption modified.

HF3282-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Horse trail pass requirements modified, and new deer license fee category created, muzzleloader scopes allowed and special bear hunting permit provided.

HF3283-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Youth hunting regulations modified.

HF3284-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Voyageurs National Park; State employees prohibited from enforcing federal laws in navigable waters

HF3285-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Turkey hunt application drawing provision modified.

HF3286-Madore (DFL)**Finance**

Adults with disabilities revenue modified.

HF3287-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Debt management services regulated, and obsolete criminal provision repealed.

HF3288-Brod (R)**Finance**

Le Sueur County; nursing facility payment rates increased to geographic group III median rate.

HF3289-Juhnke (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Auctioneers exempted from certain requirements applicable to professional fundraisers.

HF3290-Peterson, S. (DFL)**E-12 Education**

School readiness assessments and kindergarten transition strategies provided.

HF3291-Kalin (DFL)**Taxes**

Sales tax exemption provided for cities, counties and townships.

**HF3292-Dittrich (DFL)
E-12 Education**

School trust fund lands management provided, school trust fund land return improvements provided, Permanent School Fund Advisory Committee mission redefined and report provided.

HF3293-Clark (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Pollution Control Agency required to analyze cumulative pollution effects in an area prior to issuing a permit.

Thursday, Feb. 21

**HF3294-Drazkowski (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Identity theft crime expanded to include using another's identity to obtain employment, and penalty provided.

**HF3295-Solberg (DFL)
Higher Education & Work Force
Development Policy and Finance
Division**

Conflict of interest rules clarified for local economic development authorities.

**HF3296-Johnson (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Independent contractor status rule exception eliminated, and audit activities required.

**HF3297-Dettmer (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies &
Veterans Affairs**

Brevet rank eligibility promotion provision changed.

**HF3298-Dettmer (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies &
Veterans Affairs**

Persian Gulf War ribbon authorization repealed.

**HF3299-Gunther (R)
Finance**

Entrepreneurial economic development initiatives implemented.

**HF3300-Eastlund (R)
Health & Human Services**

Minnesota health care program outreach requirements for school districts eliminated.

**HF3301-Kalin (DFL)
Finance**

Transportation construction project disclosure and proposal provision requirements changed, Technical Review Committee compensation required and design-build request provisions modified.

**HF3302-Atkins (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Public meeting written material protection provided.

HF3303-Otremba (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Video lottery terminals established, duties and powers provided, revenue use provided, gambling taxes modified, and clarifying, conforming and technical changes made.

**HF3304-Mahoney (DFL)
Finance**

University of Minnesota grant program established for innovative technology and economic development research.

HF3305-Thao (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk highway bridge signs required.

**HF3306-Tillberry (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Minnesota Securities Act modified, regulations provided and technical changes made.

**HF3307-Hornstein (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources**

Telephone directory recipient removal allowed from distribution list.

**HF3308-Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services**

Licensed professional clinical counselor provisions modified.

**HF3309-Pelowski (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform,
Technology & Elections**

Employee relations duty transfer to Department of Finance codified.

**HF3310-Nornes (R)
Finance**

Fergus Falls; Luverne; nursing facility payment rates increased to geographic group III median rate.

**HF3311-Atkins (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform,
Technology & Elections**

Revocation of retirement annuity application in favor of disability benefit application authorized in certain instances.

**HF3312-Olin (DFL)
Finance**

Drainage system repair fund modified to maximum amount allowed.

**HF3313-Erickson (R)
Local Government &
Metropolitan Affairs**

Public hearing interim use ordinances authorized.

**HF3314-Erickson (R)
Finance**

Morrison County; Platte River Watershed dam funding provided.

**HF3315-Mahoney (DFL)
Taxes**

Small business research and development credit allowed.

**HF3316-Mariani (DFL)
E-12 Education**

Pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education provided for general education, education excellence, special programs, libraries, and self-sufficiency and lifelong learning.

HF3317-Kranz (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory Offender Registration Law; machine gun and short-barreled shotgun possession included on list of crimes against a person for registration.

**HF3318-Kranz (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory Offender Registration Law; machine gun and short-barreled shotgun possession added to list of crimes against a person requiring registration.

**HF3319-Kranz (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Firearm discharge reporting modified.

**HF3320-Nelson (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform,
Technology & Elections**

Teachers Retirement Fund Association; special direct state aid reference corrected.

**HF3321-Faust (DFL)
Finance**

Independent School District No. 2580, East Central account transfer authorized.

**HF3322-Nelson (DFL)
Local Government &
Metropolitan Affairs**

Street improvement districts and fees established, street improvement plan adoption required and collection of fees authorized.

**HF3323-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government &
Metropolitan Affairs**

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board authorized to adopt standards for dedication of land to the public or a payment of a dedication fee on certain new commercial and industrial development.

**HF3324-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Pistol and semiautomatic military-style assault weapons provisions modified.

**HF3325-Tschumper (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Health care access fund purpose clarified, and transfers eliminated.

**HF3326-Eastlund (R)
Environment & Natural Resources**

Rush Lake; experimental iron treatment required to reduce phosphorus levels.

**HF3327-Beard (R)
Commerce & Labor**

Telephone company alternative regulation plan provisions modified.

**HF3328-Anzelc (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota forests for the future program created.

**HF3329-Brynaert (DFL)
E-12 Education**

Academic success state measures established.

HF3330-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Uncased firearms report required.

**HF3331-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Retail property and retail establishment under theft definitions added, and new penalties created.

**HF3332-Dill (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Credit card surcharges regulated.

**HF3333-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Cancer risk protection standards established, and rule modification required.

**HF3334-Magnus (R)
Finance**

Local renewable energy initiative enacted to finance small-scale renewable energy projects, account established.

**HF3335-Solberg (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Health plan companies and hospitals contract disclosure required.

**HF3336-Drazkowski (R)
Taxes**

Homesteads owned by persons age 65 years or older taxable market value increase prohibited.

**HF3337-Drazkowski (R)
Environment & Natural Resources**

State park system additions proposal public hearing petitions authorized.

**HF3338-Drazkowski (R)
Taxes**

Mortgages in disaster areas exempted from mortgage registry tax.

**HF3339-Loeffler (DFL)
Finance**

Minneapolis nursing facilities payment rates increased to the geographic group III median rate.

**HF3340-Bigham (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Theft criminal penalties modified.

**HF3341-Juhnke (DFL)
Finance**

Litchfield and Willmar additional wastewater treatment loan funding provided.

**HF3342-Bigham (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory offenders registration address verification procedure clarified, registration procedure clarified relating to offenders from other states, database checks required for persons booked at jails and criminal penalties imposed.

**HF3343-Juhnke (DFL)
Finance**

Wind energy conversion system aggregation program and account established.

HF3344-Severson (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veterans' state employment preference provisions modified.

HF3345-Sertich (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Film and TV Board grant authorized through Explore Minnesota Tourism.

HF3346-Davnie (DFL)
Finance
Mortgage foreclosure assistance provided, and maximum amount of financial assistance increased.

HF3347-Moe (DFL)
E-12 Education
Adequate yearly progress designations appeals process clarified relating to education.

LATE ACTION

Transportation funding bill passes

Gov. Tim Pawlenty will be given the opportunity to keep his word and use his "taxpayer protection pen."

Awaiting action is a transportation finance bill that supporters say will address some necessary road, bridge and transit needs, but others disapprove because it is loaded with tax and fee increases.

Sponsored by Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston), HF2800 was passed 89-44 by the House Feb. 21. It was sent to the Senate for their consideration that night. Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) is the Senate sponsor.

"This is a problem-solving compromise to benefit every person in the state," said Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth). He said this would help provide some property tax relief, and would create many new jobs.

An amendment offered by Rep. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria) that would have forced local

government units to lower property taxes for each dollar received because of this bill was rejected 98-34.

The \$6.7 billion funding proposal would, in part:

- raise the state's gas tax by 2 cents the day after enactment and another 3 cents on Oct. 1, 2008;
- create a \$25 tax credit for the two lowest tax brackets to help offset the increase;
- increase vehicle tab fees on newly registered vehicles and remove tab fee caps;
- authorize counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to impose a 0.25 percent metropolitan transportation sales tax without referendum and a \$20 excise tax on vehicles sold at retail. In the other 80 counties, a tax of up to 0.5 percent could be raised by voter referendum and only for a specific project; and
- authorize \$1.8 billion in trunk highway bonding for fiscal years 2009 to 2018, with \$1 billion of that in the first two years. A gas tax debt surcharge of up to 3.5 cents

would be established to repay the trunk highway bonds.

In each of the first two fiscal years, \$300 million in bonding would go toward the trunk highway bridge program and \$200 million to highways, Lieder said. He indicated this would allow the Department of Transportation, within the next two years, to begin repair or replacement of the 13 highway bridges on trunk highways considered fracture-critical.

An amendment successfully offered by Lieder, changed the bill so the metro area sales tax would be allocated just for transit purposes. It previously required at least 50 percent go to transit. No more than 1.25 percent of the total revenues can be used for bicycle and pedestrian programs.

A Republican plan, announced one day earlier, would have relied on borrowing and cuts to state agency and human services budgets. Pawlenty said he opposes any tax increases.

— M. COOK

NOTES

DeLaForest says this term is his last

Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover) announced that he will not run for re-election this year.

DeLaForest cited the difficulty of balancing his political, professional and family commitments as the primary reason for his decision.

"I'm just not in the same place I was six years ago," DeLaForest said in a press release. "Over time it became exceedingly difficult to meet my goals in these three areas. I realized it was time for a change."

DeLaForest said his future plans include spending time watching Little League baseball, attending swimming lessons and taking a family vacation to recharge his batteries and plot new goals.

"While I have very much enjoyed elective office, its is now time for me to return to private life and begin the next chapter in my journey," he said.

— B. HOGENSON

Rep. Olson apologizes

In an emotional apology on the House floor Feb. 18, Rep. Mark Olson (R-Big Lake) implored his colleagues to forgive him for actions that he said brought "dishonor and disrepute" to the House.

"Madame speaker, members and staff: you are all aware of my personal failure in November of 2006," Olson began, referring to a highly publicized incident in which he was accused of pushing his wife to the ground. He was ultimately convicted of one count of misdemeanor domestic assault and acquitted of another.

Olson said he accepted "full responsibility" for his actions, and noted that "all the responsibilities placed upon me by the court have been fulfilled and completed."

"Will you forgive me for bringing dishonor and disrepute to you as my colleagues, and to this institution?" Olson asked.

Olson was suspended and then ultimately expelled from the House Republican caucus in the months following his arrest. His remarks were greeted with a brief round of applause from his colleagues in the House Chamber.

— N. BUSSE

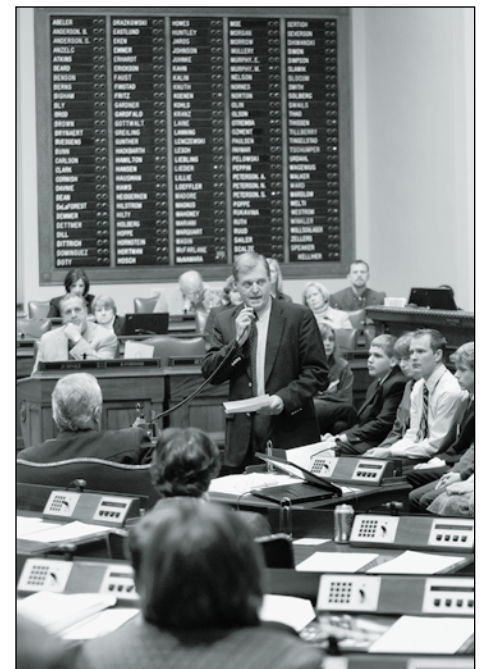


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Mark Olson asks members of the House: "Will you forgive me for bringing dishonor and disrepute to you as my colleagues, and to this institution?" Olson was convicted last summer on a domestic assault charge.

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER

MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH

MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

State roads

Road miles in Minnesota	135,585
Percent of miles that are part of the state trunk highway system.....	9
Percent of state miles traveled on trunk highways.....	59
Percent of road miles that are state trunk highway system roads in the	
Twin Cities metropolitan area.....	1
Percent of state traffic that uses those roads.....	27
Millions of miles traveled per day on the state trunk highway system in 2006	91.7
Millions of miles in 1998	81.3
Percent increase	13
Heavy commercial traffic increase, as percent, between 1998 and 2006 in	
Greater Minnesota counties	22
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Percent of expressways and other principal roads in good condition in 2007,	
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Trunk highway resources, as estimated percent, that came from motor vehicle	
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Millions MnDOT estimates that the state should annually invest in fiscal years	
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Year the Legislature created the State Highway Commission to build roads and bridges...	1905
Year MnDOT was created and assumed the	
activities of the Departments of Aeronautics and Highways, plus transportation-related	
sections of the State Planning Agency and the Public Service Department.....	1976
Percent of MnDOT funds appropriated by the Legislature	81
Percent statutorily appropriated.....	19
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Year the first section of interstate was completed between	
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— M. Cook

Sources: Department of Transportation; "State Highways and Bridges," February 2008, Office of the Legislative Auditor.

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