

SESSION WEEKLY

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A CAPITAL INVESTMENT

ROAD TRIP

CONFORMING TO THE FEDS

WHAT PRICE FOR CLEAN DRINKING WATER?

GOOD HEALTH — A PRIMARY CONCERN

HF3628 - HF3885



SESSION WEEKLY

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

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On the cover: Rep. Steve Simon, left, and Rep. Lynn Wardlow sign a banner celebrating Minnesota's sesquicentennial. The banner, which has traveled across the state, is being signed by all legislators. Minnesota became a state on May 11, 1858. According to the Minnesota Sesquicentennial Commission, "the Sesquicentennial will be a yearlong, statewide commemoration and a catalyst, to learn from our past and connect all of us as Minnesotans in creating a thriving, innovative future." More information can be found at www.mn150years.org.

— Photo by: Sarah Stacke

A bill about jobs and infrastructure

As economy softens, amount available for projects could decrease

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

With dismal job numbers, a recession at the state's doorstep and a nearly \$1 billion deficit projected for the biennium, this year's House capital investment bill is all about maximizing jobs, federal dollars and other matches.

"We do think of this as a jobs bill to put people back to work," said Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul), sponsor of HF380, and chairwoman of the House Capital Investment Finance Division.

The \$1.06 billion bill, which includes \$960 million general obligation bonding, seeks improvements to zoos, planning for or building commuter rail lines, historic preservation, land acquisition for a new state park, and higher education preservation and construction.

"We're focusing on infrastructure and the jobs that come out of building that infrastructure. We believe that can have a transforming effect on the state," Hausman said.

Approved 99-34 by the House March 6, the

Senate later received the bill, with Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon) as the sponsor, and replaced its language for that of the House. The bill passed 57-9, and it was returned to the House where a conference committee was called to work out the differences.

The spending amount proposed in both the House and Senate measures is close to that in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's initial recommendation. But the project list varies between the three.

With more than \$4 billion in requests from local governments and state agencies, bringing the bill down below \$1 billion in

general obligation bonding hasn't been easy, and Hausman acknowledges more cuts may lay ahead.

Traditionally a bonding bill spends around 3 percent of the General Fund. Based on the February Forecast projecting a nearly \$1 billion deficit this biennium, the governor recommends lowering the bonding cap to \$825 million.

"This is a bill that has to get smaller rather than bigger. The dilemma is that everyone here is an advocate for their communities," Hausman said.

On the House floor, an amendment successfully offered by Rep. Bev Scalze (DFL-Little Canada) diffused concern that the House bill would come in at more than the 3 percent threshold. Passed 128-4, the amendment affirms the intent that the biennial General Fund appropriation for debt service not exceed 3 percent.

Republicans termed the bill one of "niceties, not necessities."

"In a time when Minnesotans are hurting financially, the bill is too big," said Rep. Paul Kohls (R-Victoria). "Ask the question; are the projects in the bill truly critical to regional or state importance?"

Proposed projects

Last year the \$334 million capital investment bill, which Hausman sponsored, was vetoed by the governor.

While some projects in last year's vetoed bill are included, such as \$38 million for a Duluth arena, it took some "thinking outside the box" for others to make it onto the list. Hausman referred specifically to funding for new bioscience facilities at the University of Minnesota and housing initiatives through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. Both propose to use their own bonding authority to secure funding, while the state would cover the debt service payments.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

The Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center Authority (DECC) could receive \$38 million to replace the current Duluth arena. The building would provide a new home for UMD hockey programs, and could attract larger events to the city than is possible with the current facility.

First Reading continued on page 4

Environment

Bonding proposals for environment and natural resources-related spending are a little more than \$200 million with the bulk of the money, \$135.8 million, targeted to the Department of Natural Resources. Some DNR bonding highlights include:

- \$28.2 million for various flood control efforts;
- \$18.5 million for state park rehabilitation, development and facility improvements;
- \$15.5 million for Lake Vermilion State Park acquisition and development;
- \$13.9 million for grants for regional and local parks;
- \$13.5 million for acquisition and development of state trails;
- \$8 million for wildlife area acquisition and improvement; and
- \$5.5 million for grants for regional and local trails.

The Pollution Control Agency would receive \$32.5 million, with \$25 million from the state's remediation fund slated for cleanup projects at closed landfill sites, including the Washington County Landfill. Another \$5 million in general obligation bonding is for a beneficial reuse of wastewater demonstration project and \$2.5 million for remediation systems at the Albert Lea Landfill.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources would receive \$39.3 million, with \$35 million going to the Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve program to purchase conservation easements. Another \$3 million is for wetland replacement and \$1.3 million for Clean Water Legacy programs.

Also included is \$21.2 million for capital improvements to metropolitan parks, the St. Paul Great River National Park, the Springbrook Nature Center and other projects.

Health and human services

Bonding projects for health and human services would include:

- \$4 million for asset preservation, and safety and security of the Moose Lake Sex Offender Treatment Facility;
- \$4 million for campus redevelopment for Brainerd Regional Human Services Center; and
- \$3.5 million for Hennepin County Medical Center education training room and lab expansion.

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency would receive \$2 million to address long-term homelessness needs by establishing a nonprofit housing bond account within a housing development fund. The agency could then

annually issue the bonds for up to 20 years to make loans and to finance construction and rehabilitation of permanent supportive housing. The monies are not included in the governor's recommendation.

Heritage and culture

Several so-called quality-of-life projects submitted by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division include:

- \$21 million for upgrades to zoo facilities, including an expansion to the polar bear exhibit at the Lake Superior Zoo, repair and new infrastructure at the Como Park Zoo and asset preservation at the Minnesota Zoo;
- \$4 million to county and local jurisdictions as matching money for historic preservation grants;
- \$4 million for phase II construction of a National Volleyball Center in Rochester;
- \$3 million for a pre-design for Orchestra Hall and Peavey Plaza renovations in downtown Minneapolis;
- \$500,000 Historic Fort Snelling asset preservation; and
- \$300,000 for the Oliver H. Kelly Farm revitalization near Elk River.

Higher education

Generally higher education gets the greatest share of a bonding bill, and this year, at \$417 million, it's no different.

Included in the House proposal is more than \$136 million for the University of Minnesota to cover the state's share of several projects, including:

- \$48.3 million for a new science teaching and student services building on the Minneapolis campus;
- \$40 million in asset preservation;
- \$24 million for a new Bell Museum of Natural History on the St. Paul campus;
- \$10 million for an addition to the Department of Civil Engineering building at the Duluth campus, and
- \$5 million to renovate a community services building on the Morris campus.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system would receive more than \$281.4 million, including \$60 million in asset preservation. Other projects include:

- \$25.5 million for a Trafton Hall renovation at Minnesota State University, Mankato;
- \$14.9 million for a Brown Hall renovation at St. Cloud State University;
- \$13.3 million for a regional law enforcement training facility at Hennepin Technical College in Brooklyn Park;
- \$13.2 million in classroom additions at Inver Hills Community College; and

- \$13.1 million for the Lommen Hall renovation at Minnesota State-Moorhead.

K-12 education

Of the \$34 million directed to the Department of Education, \$32 million would go to complete secondary school construction in Red Lake, and \$2 million would be for library accessibility and improvement grants.

Also included is \$2 million for pre-design for a new dormitory and asset preservation at the Minnesota state academies and \$355,000 in asset preservation at the Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Public safety

Included in the areas of public safety are:

- \$16 million for expansion of the Faribault Correctional Facility;
- \$11 million for asset preservation;
- \$5 million for a public safety training center at Camp Ripley; and
- \$3.66 million for a Southeastern Minnesota regional public safety training center.

The bill also asks the commissioner of public safety to develop a long-term strategic plan to address maintenance and staffing of existing crime labs and for new regional and local crime labs.

State facilities

The House State Government Finance Division recommended projects totaling \$99.12 million. Although the governor recommends \$18 million for preserving the exterior of the Department of Transportation headquarters in St. Paul, it is not included in the House recommendation.

After a substantial paring down, projects proposed include:

- \$13.4 million for State Capitol restoration; and
- \$500,000 for pre-design of a new state emergency operations center.

Transit corridors

Funding in the bill looks toward creating a network of rail lines in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"Talking line-by-line is almost irrelevant," Hausman said. "We need to look at the whole area. This all has to do with a system that works together. Most other states and regions are ahead of us."

The largest chunk is \$70 million for the Central Corridor that is designed to link downtowns Minneapolis and St. Paul. It would also be the primary east-west line in the

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees and other House activities held Feb. 28-March 6. 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

Agronomic research funding request

Plenty of solid agricultural research takes place at the University of Minnesota. But Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul) thinks more could be done.

He sponsors HF769, which would provide \$1 million to the university for basic agronomic research on native plants.

The bill was held over March 4 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. There is no Senate companion.

"There's a lot of research that's going on relating to maybe the wildlife impacts with native plants or what the carbon sequestration is or mixes, but not basic agronomic research like viability, yield, response to water, response to nutrients, pest management," Hansen said.

The bill aims to get data that landowners could use to get the best results or increase production, he said. "When you think of corn you know the number of seeds per plant population you want to have, you know the row width, you know the nutrients. Those are things that have been provided by university research that is out there in the field."

A technical advisory committee would work with the university and Department of Agriculture to help implement the program.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), the division chairman, did not sound overly optimistic about the bill's future this year, saying there "probably isn't a lot of money to work with this session." He also said the agriculture school got additional base money last year.

— M. COOK

Spraying the wrong yard

If pesticides are accidentally applied to the wrong site, currently there is little regulatory consequence.

That would change under HF2573,

sponsored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul).

Hansen told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee March 5 that he knows of incidents where lawn chemical applicators have sprayed the wrong yard.

The bill would make it a violation to apply a pesticide to a site where an application has not been requested, ordered or contracted for by the property owner or manager of the site.

Approved by the committee, it now awaits action by the full House. The Senate companion, SF2449, sponsored by Sen. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), awaits action in the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Trying to ease concerns of rural legislators, Hansen said, "I want to be clear that I am not referring to drift." He explained that drift is when the wind carries the chemical to another's property. In rural areas applicators have access to maps clearly showing fields where they are contracted to apply the chemicals.

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Wabasha) said that in rural areas, misapplication generally comes from a communication breakdown.

Paul Liemandt, Department of Agriculture assistant director, said state law is specific about chemical application, but that Hansen's concerns are not fully addressed.

But Drazkowski questioned the department's role in enforcement: "Is it the role of the department to be looking at what is a contract between a business and an individual?" Additionally he wanted to know the penalty to the applicator.

Hansen said it could start with an advisory letter, but if a pattern of abuse is established, then a monetary, or even a criminal, penalty could be applied.

— L. SCHUTZ

CONSUMERS

Bills would limit payday lending

The House Labor and Consumer Protection Division approved two bills Feb. 29 that would more heavily regulate payday lending. They both await action in the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

Payday lenders provide short-term, high-interest loans for people, who repay the money out of their next paycheck.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) sponsors HF3533, which would require payday loan companies to operate under 1995 legislation

created for them instead of operating as industrial thrift and loan companies, as most do.

"This is a loophole that allows them to operate not under the intent of this Legislature," Davnie said.

The legislation would also:

- eliminate the lender's ability to charge finance fees and establish limits for charges;
- provide a 21-day cooling off period between loans;
- prohibit the threatening of criminal process to collect a loan;
- require the lender to offer the option of repayment if the loan is for \$75 or more; and
- give the borrower the right to sue for \$1,000 per violation of these laws, plus attorney's fees.

Brad Rixmann, president of Minnesota-based PayDay America, said if this legislation passes, his 11-site company would go out of business.

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) sponsors HF3511, which would bring the state's payday lending statutes in line with those already federally mandated for military personnel. This would restrict the interest rate on these loans to an annual percentage rate of 36 percent, as well as a \$5 administrative fee.

"It seems that there is little logic in protecting our soldiers from payday loans, while allowing the same persons, when they become civilians to be gouged," said Erin Anderson, legislative director for Minnesota Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now.

The Senate companions, SF3197, sponsored by Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), and SF2838, sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), await action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

— T. HAMMELL

CRIME

Attempted robbery

Monica McIntosh said it started out as a normal day. She was driving on Interstate 94 from Minneapolis to St. Paul when a man forced her car from the left side of the freeway to the right shoulder, pinning her in. He got out of his car, threatening her and throwing things. McIntosh said that if her doors had not been locked and her windows rolled up, she's

positive he would have done much worse.

When the case went to trial, the man was convicted of attempted robbery, and given a probationary sentence. Because of credit for time served, he was out the day the final sentence was announced.

This case and others like it serve as the foundation for HF3175, sponsored by Rep. John Benson (DFL-Minnetonka). Presented to the House Public Safety Finance Division March 5, it was laid over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The bill would increase the penalty for attempted robbery to match the penalty for robbery. It would provide that anyone who commits, or attempts, a robbery against someone inside a motor vehicle is guilty of a felony and subject to a penalty 50 percent longer than the maximum penalty for simple or aggravated robbery.

Assistant Hennepin County Attorney David Brown said that in such violent situations, what's important to remember is "the emotional harm that is done when the force is made."

Rep. Tina Liebling (DFL-Rochester) said the bill may be blurring the distinction between attempting a crime and committing one. "Some may believe that they should go ahead and complete the crime because it's going to be the same [penalty] anyway," Liebling said.

State Public Defender John Stuart said he is concerned about the bill's addition of an increase in a maximum sentence, urging that such decisions be made by the Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

A companion bill, SF2680, sponsored by Sen. Terri Bonoff (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

Watching over corrections

The Office of Ombudsman for the Department of Corrections was established in 1972. It was an independent agency assigned to represent the interests of the public and investigate complaints within the department. When appropriate, it would make recommendations to correct the situation.

In 2003, the office was abolished. The interest in having an ombudsman was not.

During the 2007 session, a law established a working group to study how the state addresses complaints, assaults and deaths in the prisons and jails.

The report was presented to the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 28 by Rep. Neva Walker (DFL-Mpls) and Velma Korbel, commissioner of the Department of Human Rights.

Korbel said there are policies in place, but procedures, data collection and incident

reporting can vary among counties, depending upon available resources.

Information requested by advocacy organizations, such as race and disability data, is often not available from the Corrections Department, and rarely available from the county facilities, Korbel said.

The working group recommended that a uniform data collection process be established, that adequate funding be provided and that legislators have an orientation on department and county procedures and policies.

The group did not come to a consensus of whether an ombudsman office should be reestablished. "If you take out the DOC and the jails, you have a recommendation. But with them, you don't," Walker said.

John Poupart, department ombudsman from 1983-92, said that when the position was created, there was a lot of fear and violence in the prison system. The position helped reduce these incidents, and because the system has grown so much since, it's even more important to have the office.

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the division, said he hopes the division could explore the idea of the DOC ombudsman being part of the Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. But hiring any new staff will depend on the economy next year, he said.

— C. GREEN

Stopping shoplifting gangs

Shoplifting has become a multi-billion dollar a year industry.

HF3331, sponsored by Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park), is an effort to combat these new "organized retail crime" gangs. Presented to the House Public Safety Finance Division March 5, the bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The bill would make it a three-year felony for stealing retail property valued at more than \$200 with the intent to resell, putting a fake product code on an item forcing it to ring up at a lower price, or stealing property valued at \$50 or more and leaving through the emergency exit.

It would also be a crime for anyone facilitating these crimes, such as a fence for stolen property or those setting up the theft rings.

A second offense within three years would be a five-year felony. A third or subsequent offense within three years would be a 10-year felony.

According to Michael Ward, an attorney for the Target Corporation and a former federal prosecutor, these organized retail rings account for more than \$30 billion a year in lost merchandise. Ward said that while companies

such as Target are spending thousands of dollars every year to fight this trend, the gangs are still functioning.

Ward said, because of the availability and anonymity of the Internet, these theft rings can sell stolen merchandise to a global market with high return. Instead of getting 30 cents on the dollar, they can now get twice that, Ward said.

A companion bill, SF3074, sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

EDUCATION

Schools funding eligibility

A bill laid over March 4 by the House K-12 Finance Division would allow 230 school districts to increase levies without voter approval for health and safety projects.

Laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill, HF2980, sponsored by Rep. John Benson (DFL-Minnetonka), would eliminate square footage requirements from the alternative facilities program, which now allows large school districts to undertake health and safety projects and deferred maintenance projects without first seeking voter approval.

Under current law, a district is eligible for the program if it has:

- at least 66 students per grade;
- either more than 1.85 million square feet of space and an average age of building space 15 years or older or at least 1.5 million square feet and an average building age of at least 35;
- insufficient revenue from other sources; and
- a 10-year facility plan approved by the education commissioner.

This bill offers school districts program revenue if the district's average building age exceeds 25 years. It also raises the maximum amount of deferred maintenance revenue from \$60 to \$100 per pupil unit beginning in fiscal year 2010, increases the maximum lease levy amount for school district facilities from \$100 to \$150 per pupil and raises the additional lease levy for school districts that are members of an intermediate school district from \$25 to \$50 per pupil.

Benson said repair and upkeep issues keep escalating with a state backlog now reaching \$4 billion. He said he is a supporter of local control for school districts, and noted the money does not come from the state.

A companion bill, SF2813, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Wiger (DFL-Maplewood), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— T. HAMMELL

Task force about achievement gap

Headed to the floor is a bill that would establish a state task force to deal with disparities in the academic performance of student groups based on race, ethnicity and income.

Sponsored by Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul), HF3472 would encourage school districts experiencing academic achievement differences to create a plan and budget to deal with the problem. The plan would be submitted to the education commissioner for review, and it would then be sent to an advisory task force on improving students' academic achievement. The findings would be reported to the Legislature.

The bill was approved March 4 by the House E-12 Education Committee.

Mariani said one of the early goals of federal No Child Left Behind legislation was to eliminate racial disparities.

"As members know, the devil is in the details of everything we do," he said.

Stan Mack, superintendent of Robbinsdale Area Schools, said that, in eight years, the district has changed to have 44 percent students of color and 1,800 English language learners.

"We are pleased that the state has a direction of focus on this issue, because in those same eight years the amount of federal funding has actually dropped," he said.

Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton) said the task force would create redundancy in the Department of Education.

"In the end, when we get to the aggregate in terms of outcomes, we continue to have a persistent, unacceptable difference in outcome," Mariani said.

A companion bill, SF3151, sponsored by Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— T. HAMMELL

American Indian education

The House E-12 Education Committee approved a bill that would require teaching candidates and teachers renewing their licenses to receive instruction in the contributions made by Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

HF3263, sponsored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls), was sent to the House Finance Committee March 4 with the suggestion that it move to the House K-12 Finance Division.

In addition to establishing representative American Indian advisory committees, the bill would appropriate \$120,000 to the Department of Education to establish an American Indian liaison position to work with American Indian students and communities.

Clark said the passage of standards involving Native American instruction was a "wonderful

CAPITOL LIGHT



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

A Capitol visitor is silhouetted against the French-style doors on a sunny afternoon March 3.

accomplishment" for the Legislature, but said the provisions need to be strengthened.

Jackie Fraedrich, program director for student services at Robbinsdale Area Schools, said there was a position until last year, but there is currently "no American Indian voice at the education department."

Rep. Sandra Peterson (DFL-New Hope) said there are questions about the test teachers would have to take that were unanswered in the bill.

"I'm a little bit protective about teachers," she said, saying they've already got a lot of requirements thrown at them.

Assistant Education Commissioner Karen Klinzing said the only concern would be with the budget.

"We support a full-time position, but funding would have to accompany the position," she said.

A companion bill, SF3079, sponsored by Sen. Mary Olson (DFL-Bemidji), was referred to the Senate Education Committee.

— T. HAMMELL

Labor Day school start could change

Classes in reading, writing and arithmetic could begin before Labor Day, in some years.

HF3262, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato), would allow school districts more flexibility in years when Labor Day falls later in September, specifically 2009 and 2010. The bill was approved Feb. 29 by the House E-12 Education Committee and sent to the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division.

State statute prohibits pre-Labor Day starts unless a specified exemption exists. The bill would allow public schools to begin classes Aug. 31, 2009, and Aug. 30, 2010, because Labor Day is Sept. 7 and Sept. 6 respectively, the two latest dates it can fall on the calendar. It is Sept. 1 this year.

Brynaert said the proposal is a modest one, with the interests of the state's tourism industry taken into account. Resort owners have said the earlier school start-dates cut into their business.

"I'm not immune to the education issue," said Joel Carlson, a lobbyist for the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. He said there is no evidence that the later start date would negatively impact students.

"The general, essential issue is local control," Brynaert said.

Kirk Schneidawind, associate director of governmental relations for the Minnesota School Boards Association, said the organization views this as a compromise.

He said students are already participating in sports programs before the school year starts, and the legislation would not prevent districts from starting after Labor Day.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul), the committee chairman, said he is concerned with the amount of time students have accessible to them, saying the school year schedule is tied to a society that no longer exists.

A companion bill, SF2835, sponsored by Sen. Ann Lynch (DFL-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— T. HAMMELL

EMPLOYMENT

Workforce training tax credits

Tax credits could be provided for employees looking to better their skills.

Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie) sponsors HF2779 that would create a Lifelong Learning Account program within the Department of Labor and Industry.

The bill would provide a 50 percent refundable tax credit for individual and business contributions to accounts used for worker education and training expenses.

The maximum credit would be \$1,000 for individuals and \$500 for businesses.

Like 401(k) retirement accounts, employees would contribute to the account and employers would match their contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to an annual cap.

Approved Feb. 28 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, the bill awaits action by the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

"There are skill levels that are gained in initial education and training environments that are sometimes not enough to meet the needs and demands for advanced skills and opportunities," Paulsen said. "The Hudson Institute has reported that about 60 percent of future jobs will require training that only 20 percent of the present workforce actually possesses."

Similar programs have been successfully targeted toward low-income individuals.

Randall K. Johnson, state policy director for the Council of Adult and Experiential Learning, a national nonprofit organization, said a seven-year, multi-sector demonstration in Chicago, northeast Indiana and San Francisco showed the average monthly participation of participants was \$33.82, and combined with employer contributions totaled an average \$783.72 annually.

"We found that 70 percent of all participants across all sites used their account for goals related to their current job, to get a promotion with the same employer or related work with the same employer, or in the same industry," he said.

Valerie Pace, IBM manager of corporate citizenship, said the company has announced a matching learning-account program beginning in July for its employees based on this model.

"This is particularly important for adult learners who don't traditionally qualify under the rules of financial aid," she said. "As an employer and as a state, the opportunity to recruit and retain talent, and to continue developing skills of our workforce, is key for our long-term future success."

— M. Cook

Increased paid parental leave

An employer giving an employee time off for a child's birth or adoption could receive state funds.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls), HF2676 would offer reimbursement to employers providing qualified paid parental leave.

Current law requires employers to grant up to six weeks of unpaid leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

"It's a paid parenting leave to the extent that, in essence, the employer pays one-third, the

state pays one-third and the family, actually in essence, pays the other third to themselves," Mullery said. The bill would require the leave to be at least six consecutive weeks, and reimbursement would be capped at \$250 per week.

The bill was held over Feb. 28 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

Mullery said the bill is based on a policy used at ECM Publishing, owned by former Gov. Elmer Andersen.

"He was very concerned with the development of young children, and put forward a plan to his employees," said Jim Koppel, director of the Children's Defense Fund Minnesota. "He basically pays 40 percent of the average salary over the last three years you worked at the company. You have to be there a minimum of two or three years before you're eligible."

Koppel said a goal is to make a situation whereby parents who want to stay home for up to 26 weeks with a new child would be able to do so without sacrificing too much in lost salary. "There's really no financial way that many parents can now take that time off and be at home," he said.

No fiscal note was provided, but Mullery said one has been requested.

Amy Brenengen, director of the Office on the Economic Status of Women, said this would create retention and loyalty to businesses.

"This is voluntary; it shares the cost among three different entities," she said. "It's good for families, it's good for women and it's good for men."

— M. Cook

ENVIRONMENT

Round two for cap-and-trade

A less aggressive version of a bill that would lay the groundwork for implementing a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota was approved March 4 by a House committee.

HF3195, sponsored by Rep. Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton), is also known as the Green Solutions Act of 2008. Its goal is to help reduce the state's contribution to global climate change by establishing a system in which total greenhouse gas emissions are capped and major emitters could purchase and sell emission allowances to one another.

The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee took testimony on a previous version of the bill Feb. 26. That

version drew heavy criticism both from power companies — who said a statewide cap-and-trade system would put Minnesota at a competitive disadvantage — as well as Commerce Department officials, who claimed it would hamper negotiations for a regional system.

The latest version of the bill, as amended by Knuth, focuses on Minnesota's role in the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord, an agreement signed last year by Gov. Tim Pawlenty that seeks to establish a regional cap-and-trade system in conjunction with several other states and one Canadian province. In addition to pushing the state to participate in the proposed regional system — an approach favored by the power companies — the bill provides for a pair of studies to help figure out how best to implement a cap-and-trade program.

The bill also seeks to stake out a role for the Legislature in regional system negotiations by appointing a six-member, bipartisan team of legislators to advise the governor's stakeholder group and participate as observers in the negotiations.

Knuth said the bill represented a "very significant compromise," and noted that a particularly controversial requirement for power companies to buy their emission allowances by way of an auction has been changed to read, "to the extent economically feasible."

The bill now goes to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. A companion bill, SF2818, sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

FAMILY

Child care assistance

Putting a child in day care for the first years of his or her life can cost just as much, if not more, than college.

Most Twin Cities metropolitan area day cares charge around \$160 per week, according to the St. Paul-based Resources for Child Caring. While many parents balk at the price of college tuition, day care costs can add up to more than \$30,000 in just four years.

Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program helps low-income families afford child care by helping parents with part of the cost. But in recent years, child care rates have escalated as funding has been cut. Even with low reimbursement rates and strict eligibility criteria, the program currently has a waiting list of more than 4,000 families.

Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), chairwoman of the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division, sponsors three bills to inject funds into the program in hopes of shortening waiting lists and increasing reimbursement to providers. HF2637, HF2689 and HF2555 were laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

Slawik told the division March 4 that the budget deficit diminishes the likelihood that the bills will be funded, but said it's important to keep the issue in mind.

Wendy Weber, a Maplewood parent of a 2- and 8-year-old said she's on the waiting list for day care assistance. Childcare costs for her 2-year-old eat up nearly 38 percent of the family's income, she said. That puts the family in a difficult situation, but without child care, she wouldn't be able to work at all.

Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) sponsors a trio of companion bills. SF2850 awaits action in the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. SF2849 and SF2851 await action in the Senate Finance Committee.

— C. BLANCHARD

Presume joint physical custody

When couples divorce, Minnesota law presumes joint legal custody. It does not, however, presume joint physical custody.

HF1262, sponsored by Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) and approved Feb. 28 by the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, could change that.

The bill, awaiting action by the House Public Safety Finance Division, would change the presumption of physical custody to joint, but does not specify the amount of time each parent has to spend with the children.

Mahoney, who has been involved with similar bills for at least six years, stressed that "a parent should be able to share their values with their children, be it religion or their morals."

Molly Olson, executive director of the Center for Parental Responsibility, said the bill would help "remove obstacles from keeping both parents in the lives of the children."

According to Olson, because of current law, mothers receive sole custody 85 percent to 90 percent of the time, while many fathers are stripped of their responsibilities. Joint physical custody, Olson said, can help reduce conflict and domestic abuse. "If you're concerned about domestic abuse, stopping a father from seeing their child is the worst form of abuse."

Liz Richards, legal program coordinator for the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, said that granting joint physical custody is not always in the best interest of the children, nor does it decrease conflict. "This is not about

access to the kids. This should be about what is truly best for the children."

Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul) successfully offered an amendment proposing the Supreme Court convene a study group to evaluate the family court processes and procedures, and report to the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2009. Any changes to statute would happen after the Legislature reviews the report.

A companion bill, SF1606, sponsored by Sen. Kathy Saltzman (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— C. GREEN

GAME & FISH

Omnibus bill clears first hurdle

The 2008 omnibus game and fish bill cleared its first hurdle March 3 when the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved it and referred it to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The bill, HF3547, sponsored by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake), comprises a package of numerous proposed policy changes relating to hunting and fishing laws.

Some highlights of this year's bill include:

- increasing the cock pheasant bag limit to three per day after the 16th day of the pheasant season (this measure was included in last year's game and fish bill but was removed in a conference committee);
- allowing crossbow hunting of bear and turkey during their respective regular firearm seasons;
- allowing anglers to use two lines simultaneously;
- creating a "conservation angling license" that would cost two-thirds the price of a regular license, allow license-holders to take up to one-half of the normal fish possession limits, and be valid for 14 consecutive days;
- requiring the Department of Natural Resources to submit a report to the Legislature by Jan. 1, 2009, evaluating the effectiveness and necessity of the state's uncased firearms laws;
- allowing youths who will turn 12 during the calendar year to obtain a license to hunt big game;
- forbidding hunters from taking deer by archery while in possession of a firearm;
- permitting the use of scopes on muzzle-loading rifles to hunt deer;
- creating a \$52 all-firearm season deer hunting license allowing hunters to take two deer, only one of which may be a buck; and

- changing "one-over" walleye and northern pike limits from daily taking limits to possession limits.

There is no Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

VHS protection measures proposed

A House division approved a package of measures designed to prevent the deadly viral hemorrhagic septicemia fish virus from spreading into Minnesota waters.

HF3550, sponsored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), represents the Department of Natural Resources' recommendations for curbing the spread of VHS — a fatal and highly contagious pathogen that causes internal hemorrhaging in fish. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill March 5.

Roy Johannes, a fisheries program consultant for the DNR, said the bill's provisions would restrict the movement of potentially contaminated fish and fishing equipment, and allow the department to track the movement of fish that are potential carriers of the virus.

Some of the new restrictions would include:

- new certification and licensing requirements for those who import, stock or farm fish susceptible to VHS;
- a ban on fishing equipment used in VHS-infected waters from being used in non-infected waters;
- a requirement that minnow farmers have their minnows tested for diseases;
- a ban on using bait from VHS-infected waters; and
- a repeal of a law allowing persons age 16 or younger to transport fish home for use in an aquarium.

Division Chairman Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake) asked Johannes whether it is necessary to bar children from taking wild fish home for their aquariums, remarking, "I hate to see the kids get caught on this hook."

Johannes replied that fish taken for aquariums undergo stress that makes them more susceptible to disease, and added that many of those fish end up getting thrown back into public waters when they outgrow the aquariums.

Rep. Dean Simpson (R-Perham) and Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) expressed concern that the requirement for minnow farmers to have their stocks tested for diseases could place an undue financial burden on the state's aquaculture industry.

"Are we trying to control a possible problem, or are we trying to price somebody out of business?" Simpson asked.

The bill now goes to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. It has no Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Studying Iron Range miners health

A rare, fatal form of cancer, mesothelioma comes primarily from asbestos fiber, which is naturally occurring in some Iron Range areas. In analyzing data, the Department of Health found that 58 Iron Range miners have died from mesothelioma, a disease that can take decades to develop following exposure. Those that died are among 72,000 people that worked in the state's iron mining industry between the 1930s and 1982.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) sponsors HF3569 that would make a onetime \$4.9 million appropriation from the workers compensation special fund for the university to lead an evidence-based, industry-specific study of workers' health, including lung health.

"We want to get to the bottom of this once and for all," he said.

Approved March 5 by the House Higher Education and Work Force Policy and Finance Division, the bill was sent to the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division.

A companion bill, SF3300, sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

"I'm asking your help not for me ... but for the new miners who are just starting," said Charlie Olson, a third-generation steelworker, who worked in mines for 38 years. "If this is a hazard to them, hopefully we can found out why and repair it."

The university will work on the study with the Health Department, Natural Resources Research Institute at the university's Duluth campus and other private and public organizations and affected groups. Work must be completed by 2013.

Jeff Mandel, an associate professor in the school's Division of Environmental Health Sciences, said the study would include comparing the effects of different exposure levels, and a comparison of current and former miners on their health status versus how long they were employed in the mines.

Other family members may also be tested because of concern over potential harmful effects for others exposed to dust from taconite operations.

— M. COOK

Striving for healthier youth

A bill approved March 4 by the House E-12 Education Committee takes direct aim at childhood obesity.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls), who sponsors HF3390, said prevention is the easiest and most cost-effective way to lower health care costs over time.

The bill would add nutrition education to the list of subject areas required by schools; require the education and health commissioners to establish and implement a Body Mass Index monitoring system in schools; and establish a task force which would set statewide curriculum in this area.

Charlie Kyte, executive director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators, said he could not tell from the bill if it would mandate BMI checks.

"What's happening, it's leaving our schools and our teachers again as a prime target for parents who don't think we should be doing that stuff," he said.

Karen Klinzing, assistant commissioner of the Department of Education, raised concerns about adding an additional subject area and sharing the information between departments.

"We have not really solved those problems just with reading and math and I can't imagine, trying to examine the scope, trying to deal with other agencies and other jurisdictions," she said.

The bill was sent to the House Finance Committee with the recommendation that it be referred to the House K-12 Finance Division. There is no Senate companion.

— T. HAMMELL

Meeting food shelf needs

Of the 28 bills Rep. John Benson (DFL-Minnetonka) sponsors, he said HF1233 is the most important because it has "the most essential need."

The bill would appropriate \$1.15 million for food shelf programs above the base appropriation for the current biennium. It would become part of the base for the Fiscal Year 2010-11 biennium.

"We are dealing here with basic human rights, the right to nutrition," he told the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 5.

The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in a division omnibus bill. A Senate companion, SF1331, sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Colleen Moriarty, executive director for Hunger Solutions Minnesota, said food shelves have seen a 60 percent increase in visits since 2000. The state's 300 food shelves

had 1.9 million visits last year and distributed 47 million pounds of food.

While demand is up, there hasn't been an increase in state funding since the program was established in 1995. While many communities step forward to help, they can't keep up with the demand, Moriarty said.

Clearly the economic times are having an effect on the usage, said Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti). He asked whether food shelves have looked at recovering foods from places such as grocery stores and bread companies.

Moriarty said they work with several groups for food recovery and are constantly looking for more. Although, there is less because companies have gotten better at producing foods and dollar stores now purchase items businesses used to donate to food shelves, she said.

Eastlund suggested the Legislature provide incentives to retailers to donate more to food shelves.

— P. OSTBERG

Loan forgiveness for dentists

The House Health and Human Services Committee approved a bill March 4 that would expand a loan forgiveness program for dental hygienists and registered dental assistants.

HF3254, sponsored by Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids), would instruct the Department of Health to develop a loan forgiveness or scholarship program for dental hygienists and registered dental assistants that agree "to provide dental hygiene services in an underserved or designated rural area in Minnesota."

The program would award up to three scholarships a year to internationally trained dental students who enroll in the Program for Advance Standing Students at the University of Minnesota Dental School and current dental school students. Upon graduation, the students would have to provide dental services through a nonprofit organization, community clinic or federally qualified community health center for three years. Scholarships awarded under the program would be at least \$30,000 each year that the graduates provide care.

Solberg said it would be a cost-effective way of keeping dental professionals in rural areas.

Todd Tsuchiya, testifying for the Minnesota Dental Association, said the scholarship program "can target dental services to patients who are most in need." Educational costs for dental students are very high and the program could help recruit students, he said.

A feasibility study would be required on the creation and use of community dental health coordinators to provide dental care access and education to specific populations in need of dental care under state programs.

A dental advisory committee would be developed to plan the implementation of statewide dental administration. The committee would include providers, representatives from private dental practices, community clinics, public health and the human services commissioner.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee.

A companion bill, SF3122, sponsored by Sen. John Doll (DFL-Burnsville), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Long-term homeless money

A bill that would appropriate \$1 million in an effort to end long-term homelessness for individuals and families was laid over March 5 for possible inclusion in the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division omnibus bill.

HF3381, sponsored by Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato), would appropriate the funds to the Department of Human Services for distribution to organizations and others involved in efforts to end long-term homelessness.

Brynaert said the intent is to fund Hearth Connection, a pilot program established in Ramsey and Blue Earth counties in 2000 to provide supportive housing and other resources to those facing homelessness.

Jennifer Ho, executive director of Hearth Connection, said the program has served 720 participants, including 152 families, 348 children and 137 single adults. Families in the program are directed to medical care, mental health care and permanent housing.

“Ninety percent of current participants are in their own home today. When given real options people do not choose to be homeless,” she said.

Continued funding for the program was part of last year’s health and human services funding bill vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty. Eventually \$2 million was negotiated at the end of session for the program, but it was still \$1 million short, Ho said.

“Unless we get \$1 million restored, 60 families and 90 single adults will lose the support that’s made it possible for them to break the cycle of homelessness,” she said.

The committee has some difficult decisions to make with a large budget deficit looming, said Rep. Scott Kranz (DFL-Blaine). He asked about the cost of not being able to implement the \$1 million.

Many places in the state system bare those costs such as school systems, jails and hospitals making it hard to quantify, said Ho.

A companion bill, SF3287, sponsored by Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

New mental health facility proposed

The House Mental Health Division approved a bill Feb. 29 that would provide an exception to the hospital construction moratorium, allowing a 144-bed specialty psychiatric hospital to be built in Woodbury. The bill now goes to the House Health and Human Services Committee. There is no Senate companion.

Health care plans continually expand and provide high-margin services, but neglect those

that bring in fewer dollars like mental health, said Rep. Marsha Swails (DFL-Woodbury), the sponsor of HF3539. She said more beds are needed in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Clayton, who withheld his last name during committee testimony, said he spent 11 hours recently in a Fairview-affiliated emergency room with his wife, only to return home after she didn’t receive needed care for a psychiatric episode. He said it took nearly all day for her to be admitted to the correct unit, and then there were insufficient numbers of staff to attend to patients, including his wife. They left when he realized they weren’t going to get care.

“I know this is not right. People should be able to get help when they need it,” he said.

Although his story is similar to what many legislators have been hearing from constituents, adding beds doesn’t solve the problem, said Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato).

Sara Criger, CEO of St. Joseph’s Hospital in St. Paul, said what’s needed is services like community housing, residential treatment areas, and crisis and support services that sustain those released from the mental facilities.

Julie Sonier, Department of Health director of the health economics program testified that the new facility would not be in the public’s best interest, and that it might not translate into better access or services.

Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) said the providers are overly concerned, and the new facility can peacefully coexist in the current system.

— P. OSTBERG

HOUSING

Group home concentration

The House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division tabled a bill March 4 that would have given counties the authority on whether to contract with housing services based on best practices regarding geographical locations of group homes.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley), sponsor of HF2324, said the concern came from counties where a concentration of group housing, consisting of several homes on a block or in a cul-de-sac, has the potential to change the character of a residential neighborhood. County attorneys have told municipalities that denying a contract to an already approved housing service because of too many group homes in one location could result in a lawsuit.

Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti) questioned the meaning of best practices and geographic location, which are not defined in the bill.

Saying changes should be made in by the



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

LaDonna Lampkin, right, wipes a tear as Aaron King, center, tells about his homelessness during a hearing of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division March 5. Both are participants in the New Foundations program, and are joined at the table by the program’s executive director, Mary Hartman.

division before moving forward, Rep. Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake) successfully moved to table the bill.

Admitting “the bill language may need to be further defined,” Winkler vowed to work with the concerned parties.

A companion bill, SF2125, sponsored by Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park) awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

HUMANITIES

Humming a Minnesota melody

Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Oklahoma!” is the state song of Oklahoma and John Denver’s “Rocky Mountain High” is Colorado’s state song.

So when Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), recommended March 3 to the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division designating “Hail! Minnesota” as the state anthem and searching for a new official state song, Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) asked, “Could we get some quality?”

HF2961, sponsored by Urdahl, would establish a nine-member commission to recommend an official state song to the Legislature. The bill was approved and referred to the House Finance Committee.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie said a state song commission would give the public a chance to be more involved in the state’s sesquicentennial.

The committee adopted an amendment to allow the commission to accept submissions from anyone in the country. That would allow songs by Minnesota natives like Bob Dylan to be considered. However, Ritchie said the search would encourage all Minnesotans to offer suggestions or write new material.

Before going ahead with “Hail! Minnesota,” Kahn offered an amendment to change the line, “Thy sons are strong and true.” According to the amended bill, the song could only be adopted as the state anthem if it had gender-neutral language.

If the line is changed, it won’t be the first time the song was adapted to suit its audience. According to legislative archives, the song was written in 1904 for a University of Minnesota play. To adapt the piece for the state song in 1945, the line “Hail to thee our college dear!” was replaced with “Hail to thee our state so dear!”

The companion bill, SF3457, is sponsored by Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista) and awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— C. BLANCHARD

Bringing Hollywood to Minnesota

The Minnesota Film and TV Board hopes to lure Oscar-winning directors the Coen brothers back to their home state to film a movie this year.

The board’s executive director, Lucinda Winter, said “A Serious Man” takes place in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. However, Wisconsin offers more competitive production incentives, and the board needs a boost to make sure the state’s neighbors to the east don’t get to host the movie.

If the bill is passed, “there’s no question about it, they’re here,” Winter said.

HF3345, sponsored by House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm), would allow the board to reimburse up to 20 percent of the movie’s production costs in excess of \$5 million. It was approved by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division on March 3, and referred to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

In 2006, the board did not use all of a one-time \$1.7 million state grant and the money went back to the Explore Minnesota Tourism program. The bill would allow Explore Minnesota Tourism to appropriate the money back to the board. There would be no impact on the state budget.

The movie is an original screenplay by St. Louis Park natives Joel and Ethan Coen, and the duo will also direct and produce the film. If filming occurs in the state, Winter said the movie would create about 100 jobs for Minnesotans. The production office would open in June, with filming scheduled to start in late-August or early-September.

— C. BLANCHARD

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Commission membership increase

A bill to increase the membership of the Nashwauk Public Utilities Commission was passed 130-0 by the House March 3.

Under HF2788, sponsored by Rep. Tom Anzels (DFL-Balsam Township), the city’s public utilities commission would increase its membership from three to five, with the members serving three-year staggered terms. No more than one member of the city council would be able to serve on the commission.

Public utility commissions are responsible for the management of publicly owned water and electric utilities.

Under state law, a city’s public utilities commission has three members that are appointed by the city council.

With Nashwauk being the home to a new steel mill, Anzels said city officials seek the change to be competitive in providing utilities

and services. They believe that increasing the commission membership will bring more expertise to the commission, in addition to being more democratic.

Grand Rapids was given similar authority in 1999, and Delano and Shakopee were given the same in 2002.

The change would be effective upon local approval.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids) is the sponsor.

— B. HOGENSEN

Meeting on caucus night

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law, signed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on Feb. 29, allowed local governments to hold evening meetings on March 4, 2008.

The timing of the precinct caucuses became an issue this year as the DFL and Republican caucuses were moved to Feb. 5 in order for Minnesota to be one of the states involved in the “Super Tuesday” primaries. This posed a problem for local governments that would not have been able to meet on March 4 without this law.

State statutes do not allow local government meetings and events to be held after 6 p.m. on the night of a major political party’s precinct caucuses. State law also specifies that precinct caucuses are to be held on the first Tuesday in March, which, this year, was March 4.

Rep. Ken Tschumper (DFL-La Crescent) and Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope) sponsor the law, which is effective March 1, 2008.

HF2795/SF2428*/CH153

— B. HOGENSEN

MILITARY

Inclusive memorials

The question isn’t who deserves recognition on the Veterans Court of Honor, but how much room there is for plaques on the low granite memorial located on the Capitol grounds.

Rep. A. Willie Dominguez (DFL-Mpls) sponsors HF3240, which would authorize placement of a plaque that began as a way to memorialize Minnesota Mexican-American veterans who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Michael Medina, adjutant general of Mexican American Veterans Post 5 in St. Paul, told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee March 5 that the organization came to Dominguez with the idea, and is willing to pay the bronze plaque’s \$5,000 cost. He said the idea has expanded, and is now “a way to honor veterans of all

nationalities and ethnic groups who have served in the military.”

Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar) is concerned that, with language specific to Mexican-Americans on the plaque, it could open the door for requests from other groups. “I worry about the folks who will want to say ‘Honduran-Americans’ or ‘Guatemalan-Americans.’ ... We are setting a precedent right now for future plaques out there, so we need to be careful.”

Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake) asked whether the wall could be built larger to accommodate requests, if more came forward.

Paul Mandell, principal planner for the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, said there is room for 13 plaques and nine spots are filled. “It could be expanded; the possibilities are there. The question is where would it stop?” He said that when the idea of the Court of Honor was conceived it was to avoid requests for memorialization from different groups.

The bill was approved and now awaits action by the House.

A companion bill, SF3006, sponsored by Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

SAFETY

Reducing the risk of SIDS

The chances that a child will die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is dramatically reduced by placing the child on its back to sleep and by removing items like soft pillows, stuffed animals and bulky quilts from the crib, said Kathleen Fernback, director of Minnesota Sudden Infant Death Center.

A bill, sponsored by Rep. Patti Fritz (DFL-Faribault), HF3197, would require all licensed child care providers to place babies to sleep on their backs, unless a note from a doctor requires the child to sleep on their stomach for a medical reason.

The bill was laid over at the Feb. 28 meeting of the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division for possible inclusion in the division’s omnibus bill.

Educating the public about proper sleeping positions has nearly cut the number of SIDS cases in half, Fernback said.

Current law requires all licensed daycare centers to place babies on their backs, but a note from the parent allows the daycare to change that practice.

Colleen Lindstrom tearfully recalled how her 3 ½ month-old daughter died at a daycare



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Kathleen Fernback, left, director of the Minnesota Sudden Infant Death Center for Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, reaches out to comfort Colleen Lindstrom, Feb. 28 as she wipes a tear while telling the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division about the day she arrived at the child care provider to find that her baby daughter had died.

center. When she chose the daycare center for her daughter, Lindstrom said the employees were adamant about their policy to place children on their backs, but still included a question about it on a form that she filled out.

“We couldn’t imagine that these days anyone puts their child to sleep on their stomach,” Lindstrom said.

However, a daycare employee put her daughter to sleep on her stomach, and the child likely died of SIDS or suffocation, Lindstrom said.

The mood of the meeting turned lighter when Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan) asked what was safe to put in the crib with his grandchildren.

“At what age can they have toys in there? ‘Cuz I got a 2-year-old, and there’s no room for him in the crib,” he said.

Fernback said toys and pillows are fine with a child that age.

A companion bill, SF2848, sponsored by Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— C. BLANCHARD

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

TAXES

Keeping seniors in their homes

Rising property taxes can, for some senior citizens on a fixed income, make it too expensive to stay in their homes.

So said freshman Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Wabasha), who sponsors HF3336. The bill would freeze the estimated value of a home once the owner turns 65 years old, essentially locking their property tax at the same rate until the house is sold.

The House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division laid over the bill Feb. 29 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

The estimated cost to the state would be \$730,000 in Fiscal Year 2011, according to the Department of Revenue. Drazkowski said the program could possibly save the state money on social services, by keeping senior citizens in their homes and out of assisted care facilities.

Rep. Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove) sponsors a similar bill, HF957, which would also freeze property taxes for homeowners over the age of 65, but only for those who have lived in the house for at least 25 years.

The bill would set an annual income limit of \$60,000, and add value to the property assessment for improvements to the home. The program would have to be approved first by the affected county.

The bill was also laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus bill.

Sen. Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen) sponsors the companion bill, SF681, which awaits action in the Senate Taxes Committee.

— C. BLANCHARD

Cashing in on the cabin

Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 Lakes and more than 100,000 cabins.

Not all of the cabins are on a lakeshore, but there are about 115,200 “seasonal recreational” properties in the state, according to the Department of Revenue. Whether it’s a cabin, summer home or hunting shack, the owner is not eligible for a property tax refund from the state. That would change with HF2348, sponsored by Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina).

The bill was laid over Feb. 29 by the House Property Tax Relief and Local Sales Tax Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

To be eligible for a refund, the owner’s annual income couldn’t exceed \$96,300. The maximum refund would be about \$1,800, at an annual cost of about \$9 million to the state.

About 25 percent of homeowners claim a refund on their property taxes, and if given

the option, about 20 percent of cabin owners would claim a refund, according to the department.

“A house is a house,” said Jeff Forester, executive director of the Minnesota Seasonal Recreational Property Owners Coalition, who added that most cabin owners are not rich, and oftentimes split expenses among a large extended family.

According to the group, the average annual income for a cabin owner is under \$60,000, and most have owned their cabin for more than 25 years. He said increasing land values are making it too expensive for people to hold onto their cabins. Oftentimes, owners are pressured into selling to developers who split parcels, resulting in cleared woodlands and crowded lakeshores, Forester said.

— C. BLANCHARD

TRANSPORTATION

Additional driver’s training

The 16-year-old granddaughter of Dick Zahn was killed in a traffic incident nearly five years ago near Ely.

While Zahn, who had been a driving instructor for five years, will never know exactly why the crash happened, he supports a bill that would reduce the chances of teenage driver error being a factor in future tragedies.

“What do we place on the value of training for our kids?” he asked the House Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee March 5.

Sponsored by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane

Lake), HF2460 would require at least 40 hours of classroom instruction and 10 hours behind the wheel before a teen could get their provisional license. Current law requires 30 hours and six hours, respectively, which is the same as more than 30 other states.

The bill would also increase the number of hours of prior driving time required from 30 to 50, with a logging of those hours required; make falsifying the log a misdemeanor; and would require that a provisional license holder convicted of certain DWI and moving violations not be issued a regular driver’s license until at least age 18. Current law says the person cannot be issued a license until 12 consecutive months have expired since the conviction date or age 18, whichever comes first.

Approved by the subcommittee, the bill next goes to the House Transportation Finance Division, with the recommendation it go the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

Jim Thienes, president of the Minnesota Driving School Association, supports measures to increase teen driver safety, but is concerned about the added costs.

“The cost of a teen driver’s education in the metro area is now between \$329 and \$425. With this increase in classroom and behind-the-wheel training, we’re going to be looking at approximately \$700-\$800 driver’s ed for teens.”

Thienes said 30 hours is a good amount of time for classroom instruction, but additional time behind the wheel would be beneficial. “This

learning is real world, real time and 100 percent applicable to the task they will be doing.”

A companion bill, SF2282, sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

— M. COOK

License reinstatement fee uniformity

A monetary break for juvenile drivers could be no more.

Sponsored by Rep. Karla Bigham (DFL-Cottage Grove), HF3490 would impose a \$30 reinstatement fee for juveniles whose driver’s license was revoked for a moving violation in conjunction with the use of a controlled substance.

“We do this for all other reinstatement purposes for any licensure for driving motor vehicles,” she said.

It was approved March 4 by the House Transportation Finance Division and sent to the House Finance Committee.

“In 2006, we received 1,709 convictions and we were not able to collect a reinstatement fee for those convictions,” said Pat McCormack, director of the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety. “We’re just trying to ensure that we’re administering the revocation law and reinstatement fee consistently across all driver violations.”

A companion bill, SF3189, sponsored by Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. COOK

First Reading continued from page 4

metropolitan area, which would ultimately link together many rail lines. This money would be enough to leverage federal funds for the project, although some additional state money would be needed in next year’s bonding bill. The governor and Senate have proposed the same amount.

The bill also includes \$500,000 for things like preliminary engineering, environmental studies or park-and-ride lot construction for the following transitways: Bottineau Corridor, interstates 94 and 494, Red Rock, Robert Street Corridor, Rush Line and Southwest Corridor.

The same amount is allocated for work on the Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Corridor.

The bill also includes \$4.5 million to help turn the Union Depot in St. Paul into a multi-modal transit center.

Veterans and military

Of greatest priority to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division are the state’s veterans homes. The bill includes \$2.8 million to address health and safety issues at the five homes administered through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Also included is:

- \$7.9 million for construction of a 90-bed veterans home in Kandiyohi County;
- \$6 million for asset preservation at various National Guard armories in the state, and to bring some armories into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- \$300,000 combined for veterans memorials in Virginia, Eden Prairie and Richfield; and
- \$227,000 for an addition and renovation of the Silver Bay Veterans Home.

Contributing to this article: Courtney Blanchard, Nick Busse, Mike Cook, Craig Green, Tom Hammell, Brian Hogenson and Patty Ostberg.



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PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED, PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Federal conformity and tax increases

Parties differ on future of tax bill approved by the House

By COURTNEY BLANCHARD

Two days after the House debated the omnibus tax bill late into the night, lawmakers took less than 30 minutes to pass a scaled-down and mollified bill from the Senate.

"This is truly a compromise bill," said Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover). "We can all find something we don't like."

The Senate and House passed HF3201*/SF2935 on March 6.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee, requested a motion to concur with the Senate version. After several protests from members whose proposals didn't make the final cut or who wanted more cuts, the bill passed 132-1. It only needs the governor's signature to become law.

Sponsored by Lenczewski and Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), the bill incorporates tax breaks passed by Congress into Minnesota law and includes familiar provisions from last year's vetoed tax bill. But the version passed by the House on March 3 included several disputed issues which may resurface in another tax bill this session.

That night, lawmakers debated for about six hours on what was called a time-sensitive bill. The final version includes federal conformity laws that apply for the current tax season. Legislators feared they wouldn't get it passed in time.

But federal conformity laws were packed among myriad other provisions from last

year. After the governor vetoed two tax bills last session, Lenczewski said the best way to fast-track this bill was to grab the parts from last year's bills that made it to the governor's desk without much protest.

"These bills are not new ideas," Lenczewski said. "They all had full hearings with full public testimony and made it through either the House or Senate or both."

Yet, Republicans offered more than two dozen amendments to the bill.

"There definitely are controversial issues. One of the issues that's in there is listed in the governor's veto from last year," said Rep. Dean Simpson (R-Perham), lead Republican on the tax committee.

One of the most contested provisions, sponsored by Rep. Sandy Wollschlager (DFL-Cannon Falls), would have increased property taxes on public utilities.

Last year, the Department of Revenue concluded that the value of power companies was lower than previously determined. The change will lower property taxes collected by surrounding local governments.

To offset the lost revenue, local governments

would have been permitted to collect more property taxes from power companies, even though they are valued less than before.

Revenue Commissioner Ward Einess said at the Feb. 20 meeting of the tax committee that neither his department nor the governor supports it. He speculated that it could jeopardize the bill's enactment. Republicans echoed the sentiment during floor debate.

Lenczewski said the utility provision in this year's omnibus bill is not the same one that landed on the governor's desk last year, and she thinks the governor will sign the bill.

"What's in the bill is in the middle, it's a middle-ground. It's already giving up a lot of what Rep. Wollschlager and the host communities of these utilities wanted, and it's not what the governor wanted either. And that's kind of the nature of compromise," she said.

The provision was stripped from the Senate version that was approved by the House.

A disappointed Wollschlager told the House, "We'll try again."

Republicans also targeted other sections in the bill, most of which would have allowed local governments to raise taxes. Members proposed amendments to wipe out a deed tax extension for Hennepin and Ramsey counties and new deed taxes for Anoka and Dakota counties.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) said the bill contained too many tax increases.

"Here we go into veto city," he said. "I can tell you with all due confidence, it's going to get vetoed and the veto's going to get sustained."

The deed taxes and most of the local option sales taxes were removed in the Senate.

All but one Republican-sponsored amendment failed at the debate on March 3.

The House adopted an amendment proposed by Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake), which would lessen the property taxes paid on small resorts. Another amendment nearly passed. Seifert proposed to strip local governments of their state aid if the city had a sanctuary ordinance.

According to the amendment, such an ordinance prohibits "public safety officials from undertaking any law enforcement action for the purpose of detecting the presence of undocumented persons, or to verify immigration status."

Proposed twice, the amendment failed by one vote in a nearly hour-long afternoon debate and by two votes during the evening.



A costly cleanup

State forced into putting a price on clean drinking water

By Nick Busse

If you were to take a map and draw a line starting from the center of the Washington County Landfill and running east, the first thing you'd run into would be Jim Blackford's house. These days, it's not such a great location.

"My wife and I had a great place to raise kids," Blackford said. "But we didn't know we were drinking tainted water."

Blackford is one of thousands of Lake Elmo residents and surrounding communities whose drinking water has been contaminated with perfluorochemicals (PFCs), a family of industrial compounds manufactured by the 3M Corporation. The chemicals were produced at a 3M facility in Cottage Grove, and the production waste was dumped more than 30 years ago — legally — in the landfill near Blackford's home. From there, PFCs leached into an underground aquifer that supplied Blackford's private well — and neither he nor anyone else knew about it for decades.

It's a story familiar to many east metro residents. In fact, since the Pollution Control Agency developed a method to test for PFCs in 2004, the chemicals have been detected not only in private wells like Blackford's, but municipal wells that supply the entire area. And although the potential health effects of PFCs remain a matter of scientific uncertainty, one thing is certain: those who have been impacted are demanding swift action to remove the chemicals.

"They want to be able to turn on the spigot in their house and have water they can drink ... and not worry that it's not healthy for them, their children, their pets," said Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings), whose constituents are among the many whose water is contaminated.

Unfortunately for lawmakers, in the case of the Washington County Landfill, the solution has been almost as controversial as the problem. The three other sites chiefly responsible for the east metro contamination — in Cottage Grove, Oakdale and Woodbury — are being cleaned up under an agreement between 3M and the PCA. The Washington County Landfill is different: the state owns the site, which means it has no legal recourse to

make 3M pay for the remediation. And while the company has pledged an \$8 million "gift" to help clean it up, the taxpayers will have to foot the rest of the bill.

Just how much they'll have to pay isn't quite clear.

Few options, limited funding

The PCA investigated six different options for remediation at the Washington County Landfill, ranging from construction of a plasma torch facility to incinerate the waste



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Lake Elmo Mayor Dean Johnston testifies before the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division Feb. 28 in support of a bill that provides funding for cleanup of a Washington County Landfill.

to filtering the groundwater on site to literally digging up the whole landfill and moving it, truckload-by-truckload, to another location.

The option that the PCA eventually chooses will likely depend on what happens to HF3232, sponsored by Rep. Julie Bunn (DFL-Lake Elmo). The bill would authorize \$25 million in revenue bonds for the PCA to clean up the Washington County Landfill and three other high-priority, non-PFC contaminated sites. The measure has been included in the House and Senate omnibus capital investment bills. Gov. Tim Pawlenty is recommending \$15 million for the Washington County Landfill only.

The language of Bunn's proposal leaves it to the PCA to determine how best to clean up the landfill, and asks the commissioner to report back the Legislature early next year on whether more money is needed; however, according to PCA Closed Landfill Program Manager Jeff Lewis, the amount of money provided — and the pressure on the PCA to move as quickly as possible — would likely lead the PCA to opt for a "dig and line" method.

This method, which would involve excavating the waste and placing an impermeable liner underneath it to stop the chemicals from leeching out, is preferred by the PCA for its feasibility and cost-effectiveness; however, opponents worry that the liner won't last long enough to be worth the money. The plan is expected to cost the state at least \$15 million.

"If I understand finance correctly, by the time the bonds are paid off, we will be in a position to address this problem all over again," said Lake Elmo Mayor Dean Johnston.

Johnston said the Legislature should provide funding for a more permanent solution; however, at a time when the state is already scrounging for extra cash, the more permanent options may not be feasible. An independent consulting firm placed the plasma torch option at more than \$192 million, and the "dig and truck" removal option at nearly \$67 million.

At a Feb. 19 meeting of the House Drinking Water Source Protection Subcommittee, Bunn stressed the importance of acting fast, whatever the solution.

"From the citizen's perspective, what's most important is that we move this along," she said.

Primary Care: Your life depends on it

A system overhaul is needed, working on a solution

By PATTY OSTBERG

Studies in the United States show that a 20 percent increase in the number of primary care doctors results in a 5 percent decrease in mortality and overall health care costs. Juxtapose the steadily declining number of medical students choosing primary care over specialty practices and physicians across the state are saying we have a crisis on our hands.

Frank Cerra, senior vice president for health sciences at the University of Minnesota, told the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division Feb. 27 the current medical student population can't produce enough primary care doctors to solve the access issue. To solve the crisis, the state needs to invest nearly \$1 billion over the next decade.

State legislators and officials aren't oblivious to these statistics, and agree that Minnesota's health care system needs an overhaul.

Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) said part of the solution is allowing nurse practitioners, registered nurses and those with medical licenses perform all duties that they are trained to do. The current system doesn't allow them to use their full skill set, he said.

Greater access, cost control

Huntley sponsors HF3391 that would make efforts toward cost control and creating greater access to health care.

"The timelines in this are extremely aggressive, there's no doubt about that, but Minnesota can't wait any longer. If we want to progress as a state, we need to get our health care costs under control, and we need to do it quickly," he told the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 28.

The bill would cover 96 percent of Minnesotans by 2011; set an affordability standard for how much a person would pay for health insurance in proportion to their income; reform payment structures; and promote cost-effective, high-quality care with pay-for-performance standards. It would also

allow doctors and nurses to practice the way they want to practice, Huntley said.

Studies show that, over time, patients are happier and healthier when they are in a health care home model — a patient-centered care approach. The bill would establish health care homes, which emphasize primary care and encourage collaboration between providers and patients. The health commissioner would begin certifying providers as health care homes by July 1, 2009.

"The focus of a medical home is to manage people that have chronic diseases that aren't too bad yet and keep them from getting worse," Huntley said.

The bill would also create the Minnesota Health Insurance Exchange to provide "individuals with greater access, choice, portability, and affordability of health insurance products." The exchange would create an Internet-based system to rank individual health market plans and small employer health benefit plans. Among items the rankings would consider are premiums, deductibles, co-payment and co-insurance requirements, and out-of-pocket maximum payments.

The affordability standard for MinnesotaCare would increase to 6 percent for individuals and families at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty guideline (\$31,200/individual), and 8 percent for individuals and families at or below 400 percent of the federal poverty guideline (\$41,600/individual).

As part of insurance reform, also established

in the bill, the Health Care Transformation Commission would be required to create a set of measures to rate health care providers for use in establishing statewide health improvement goals and pay-for-performance systems.

The bill awaits action in the House Commerce and Labor Committee. A companion bill, SF3099, sponsored by Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

Complementary plan


Sponsored by Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls), HF3390 would implement public health initiatives to complement the overall health care changes and savings.

It focuses on prevention of childhood diabetes and would develop a public health improvement program "to reduce the percent of Minnesotans who are obese or overweight to less than half by the year 2020." It would also focus on the reduction of tobacco use by 2 percent annually, starting in 2011.

The bill would make nutrition a required academic standard. "We have a growing number of young people being diagnosed with adult onset diabetes," and that means they will have decades of serious health challenges and can be more easily dealt with by prevention, said Loeffler. The potential savings in health care through prevention are the goals, she said.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, awaits action by the House E-12 Education Committee.

While many members of the House Health and Human Services Committee commended the bills, some expressed concern on rushing the changes and the costs associated.

"We need to take time to question some of the details," said Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud). While focusing more on primary care and less on specialties makes sense, more time is needed "to make certain that we are first doing no harm," he said. 

Road Trip

Over the summer, members of the House Capital Investment Finance Division toured the state visiting projects proposed for inclusion in this year's capital investment bill. More than \$4 billion in requests were submitted. The bill, passed by the House 99-34 March 6, included funding for projects totaling a little more than \$1 billion.

**Photos by
Tom Olmscheid**



The City of Minneapolis is requesting \$3 million for renovation design of the 35-year-old Orchestra Hall and Peavey Plaza in downtown Minneapolis. The funds would pay for improvements that could include an expanded lobby, refurbishing of the auditorium and a new choir loft.



The House bill would allocate \$300,000 to revitalize the visitor center at the Oliver H. Kelley Farm Historic Site near Elk River.



A popular North Shore tourist stop, Split Rock Lighthouse, could see improvement from a portion of an \$8 million request from the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Transportation plans to construct a Highway 61 underpass in 2010, allowing for construction of a new full-service campground.



Through the House bill, Silver Bay Veterans Home would receive \$227,000 for renovation of existing space and an addition to the nursing care facility. Constructed as an elementary school in 1953, renovations would allow for more clinical and administration space.

Monday, March 3

HF3628-Eastlund (R) **Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities common course numbering system required.

HF3629-Slocum (DFL) **E-12 Education**

GRAD test; temporary three-year appeals process established for high school seniors who do not receive a passing score, and evaluation and recommendations made by education commissioner.

HF3630-DeLaForest (R) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Commuter rail contracts may not include tort immunity for a Class I railroad.

HF3631-DeLaForest (R) **Commerce & Labor**

Motor vehicle Sunday sale statutory prohibition removed.

HF3632-DeLaForest (R) **Taxes**

Ad valorem tax imposition prohibited, and constitutional amendments proposed.

HF3633-Swails (DFL) **E-12 Education**

Course preparation and continuing education requirements established for school administrators and teachers working with gifted and talented students.

HF3634-Gunther (R) **Finance**

Adolescent Treatment Center-Winnepago funding provided.

HF3635-Hosch (DFL) **Finance**

Nursing facility and community-based long-term care provider rate adjustments provided.

HF3636-Hosch (DFL) **Finance**

Nursing facility operating cost payment rate rebase phase-in modified.

HF3637-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Medicare special needs plans modified.

HF3638-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Medicare special needs plans modified.

HF3639-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Medicare special needs plans modified and mandated report required.

HF3640-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Board of Medical Practice membership removal criteria changed.

HF3641-Howes (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Mississippi Headwaters State Forest classification mandated to prohibit use of off-highway vehicles.

HF3642-Madore (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Medicare special needs plans modified.

HF3643-Poppe (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Individual sewage treatment system professional licensing requirements modified.

HF3644-Hornstein (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Guaranteed energy savings contract terms extended and changed under the uniform municipal contracting law.

HF3645-Marquart (DFL) **Taxes**

Proposed levy certification modified for purposes of truth in taxation.

HF3646-Marquart (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Uniform Municipal Contracting Law; contract threshold subjective amount requirements changed.

HF3647-McNamara (R) **Finance**

Independent School District No. 200, Hastings school bus leasing expenses funding provided.

HF3648-Hosch (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Nursing home moratorium provisions changed.

HF3649-Hosch (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Health plan company complaint filing requirement changed.

HF3650-Zellers (R) **Commerce & Labor**

Retail sale of toys that have been recalled for safety reasons prohibited.

HF3651-Fritz (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Nursing home license revocation or suspension allowed by commissioner.

HF3652-Fritz (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Nursing facility case mix classification provisions changed.

HF3653-Winkler (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Public pool, spa and swimming pool operation governing provisions changed.

HF3654-Winkler (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corps created.

HF3655-Liebling (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

Universal prescription drug program and prescription drug bulk purchasing program establishment required by human services commissioner, dedicated fund established and mandated reports required.

HF3656-Tschumper (DFL) **Taxes**

Fountain; wastewater treatment facility sales tax exemption provided for materials, supplies and equipment.

HF3657-Hoppe (R) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Carver County Board granted authority over library system with exceptions.

HF3658-Slawik (DFL) **Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare enrollment requirements changed.

HF3659-Benson (DFL) **Finance**

Charter school sponsor fee assessment modified.

HF3660-Dettmer (R) **Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Immediate family member employment discrimination prohibited, civil actions permitted and penalties provided.

HF3661-Hilty (DFL) **Finance**

Greenhouse gas emission reduction coordinated process created.

HF3662-Hilty (DFL) **Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Public hearing and testimony provided before making an appointment to fill county board or city council vacancy.

HF3663-Hilty (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Captioning required for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers on certain campaign communications.

HF3664-Erickson (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Fish houses, dark houses and other shelters provision dates and times modified regarding how long they may be left on the ice.

HF3665-Sailer (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Local public pension plan employees and officers required to report unlawful actions.

HF3666-Dean (R) **Transportation Finance Division**

Stillwater Lift Bridge weight limits restricted.

HF3667-Mullery (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Department of Education and Minnesota Office of Higher Education data sharing permitted.

HF3668-Severson (R) **Taxes**

Military retirement benefit subtraction allowed.

HF3669-Kalin (DFL) **Finance**

Government energy conservation investment program created.

HF3670-Mullery (DFL) **Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Posttraumatic stress disorder criminal case defendant screening required, mitigated dispositions authorized for offenders who receive treatment, legislative report and collection of summary data required and information pamphlet required.

HF3671-Norton (DFL) **Finance**

Primary care physician reimbursements increased, primary care physician need determined for areas of the state and money appropriated for primary care education initiatives.

HF3672-Severson (R) **Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Korean War Veterans Day designated for July 27.

HF3673-Murphy, M. (DFL) **Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Duluth Teachers Retirement Fund Association; Rule of 90 benefit tier extended to post-1989 hires.

HF3674-Otremba (DFL) **Finance**

Staples; highway overpass funding provided.

HF3675-Erickson (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Fish house licensing requirements modified.

HF3676-Heidgerken (R) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Northern pike possession and daily limits provided, spearing of northern pike authorized statewide and rulemaking required.

HF3677-Hortman (DFL) **Environment & Natural Resources**

Fluorescent or high-intensity discharge lamp manufacturers required to organize collection and recycling programs for household generators and civil penalties provided.

HF3678-Juhnke (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Dark house fish spearing allowed for nonresidents.

HF3679-Magnus (R)
Taxes
Motor fuel and sales tax exemptions provided for special transportation service providers.

HF3680-Westrom (R)
Transportation Finance Division
Mini truck registration and operation regulated.

HF3681-Kahn (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Sunday off-sale intoxicating liquor sales authorized, and Sunday motor vehicle sales statutory prohibition removed.

HF3682-Kahn (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Off-sale intoxicating liquor sales authorized on Sunday.

HF3683-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
E-charging service provided and fingerprinting required.

HF3684-Slocum (DFL)
Finance
Hennepin-Carver Workforce Investment Board funding provided.

HF3685-Moe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Toxic chemical release reporting requirements modified.

HF3686-Tingelstad (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
National Guard and reservist businesses provided a stay of proceedings for members who have been mobilized into active military service.

HF3687-Simon (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Cass County; private sale of certain surplus state land bordering public water required.

HF3688-Dominguez (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Minneapolis; on-sale intoxicating liquor license authorized.

HF3689-Pelowski (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Health Care Peer Review Committee reestablished relating to quality of care and treatment of offenders, and Minnesota Breeders Fund advisory committees reestablished.

HF3690-Kalin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Youth correction, county jail, adult offender supervision and fingerprinting technical corrections and amendments made, and Advisory Council on Interstate Adult Offender Supervision annual report date changed.

HF3691-Anzelc (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Rainy/Lake of the Woods Watershed task force established and management plan required.

HF3692-Loeffler (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Minneapolis; nonprofit riverfront revitalization corporation authorized and report required.

HF3693-Masin (DFL)
Finance
Motorcycle veteran contribution plate issuance authorized.

HF3694-Hilstrom (DFL)
Taxes
Low-income housing property classification repealed.

HF3695-Sailer (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Clearwater County tax-forfeited land public sale authorized.

HF3696-Kahn (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Hennepin County; Public Employees Retirement Association general employee retirement plan service credit purchase permitted.

HF3697-Tschumper (DFL)
Taxes
Fountain; wastewater treatment facility sales tax exemption provided for materials, supplies and equipment.

HF3698-Cornish (R)
Finance
Debt service equalization program equalizing factors and threshold rates increased, school district ability to improve school buildings and facilities improved and property taxes reduced.

HF3699-Hilty (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Discretionary partial recounts provided, and recount and post-election review procedures specified.

HF3700-Hilty (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Districting principles established for legislative and congressional plans, appointment of a commission provided to recommend the boundaries of legislative and congressional districts, and redistricting limited to once per decade.

HF3701-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Background check data on individuals classified as private.

HF3702-Kalin (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Election assessment and payment of costs provided.

HF3703-Madore (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Non-emergency medical transportation dispatching prohibited by brokers and coordinators.

HF3704-Bunn (DFL)
Taxes
Research activity credit increase modified.

HF3705-Madore (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Medicare special needs plans modified.

HF3706-Severson (R)
Finance
Special license plate surcharge repealed.

HF3707-Hortman (DFL)
Finance
Industry sector training initiatives funding provided.

HF3708-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health profession licensing requirements changed.

HF3709-Koenen (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Chippewa County; conveyance authorized for surplus state land bordering public water.

HF3710-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Hospital records transfer to electronic image authorized.

HF3711-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Human services background checks disqualification standard of evidence defined as clear and convincing evidence.

HF3712-Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Minnesota Family Investment Program consolidated fund eligibility clarified.

HF3713-Nelson (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Duty disability pension amount provided for injured police officers and firefighters, and employers required to make reasonable efforts to provide less hazardous duty for injured employees.

HF3714-Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services
Prescription substitution for immunosuppressant drugs prohibited.

HF3715-Nelson (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Volunteer firefighter relief associations' maximum service pension amounts increase authorized.

HF3716-Ozment (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Firefighter Standards and Training board duties added, rulemaking authorized and licensing standards established.

HF3717-Kalin (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Large energy facility certificate of need filing advance notice required to local units of government.

HF3718-Hornstein (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Business Energy Accountability Act of 2008 adopted providing for a voluntary inventory of business energy use.

HF3719-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Human services county-based purchasing plans requirements modified, premium tax and provider surcharge exemptions removed, and county-based purchasing and taxpayer risk study required.

HF3720-Wollschlager (DFL)
Finance
Goodhue County nursing facilities designated as metro for purposes of reimbursement rates.

HF3721-Dittrich (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health insurers required to offer small employers the option to purchase flexible benefit plans.

HF3722-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Extended unemployment benefits provided under certain circumstances.

HF3723-Kahn (DFL)
Finance
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board authorized to retain proceeds from condemnation of park lands necessary for reconstruction and expansion of marked Interstate 35W at the Mississippi River.

HF3724-Zellers (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Driver's license revocation and suspension grounds modified to exclude certain misdemeanor traffic offenses.

HF3725-Hornstein (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Urban partnership agreements authorized to provide user fees for high-occupancy vehicle lanes and dynamic shoulder lanes, rulemaking exemptions provided and penalties imposed.

HF3726-Hornstein (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Wireless communication devices limited while operating motor vehicles.

HF3727-Madore (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Long-term disability parking city permit program minimum requirements established.

HF3728-Paulsen (R)
E-12 Education
World languages programs and aid provided to school districts.

HF3729-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Legislative Energy Commission established, and Legislative Electric Energy Task Force abolished.

HF3730-Kalin (DFL)
E-12 Education
Electronic library for Minnesota databases access to local libraries provided.

HF3731-Walker (DFL)
E-12 Education
Responsible family life and sexuality education programs established.

HF3732-Slawik (DFL)
E-12 Education
Office of Early Learning established, school readiness assessments created and basic sliding fee waiting list reduced.

HF3733-Peterson, S. (DFL)
E-12 Education
Alternative teacher professional pay system clarified and oversight established.

HF3734-Drazkowski (R)
E-12 Education
Public school system study required.

HF3735-Kalin (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Commission of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard-of-Hearing renamed, and provisions modified.

HF3736-Masin (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Deceased persons bodies transportation provisions modified to allow the use of funeral conveyance requested by the decedent.

HF3737-Solberg (DFL)
Finance
State agency budget access provided to members of the Legislature, forecast of General Fund cash flow required, budget modifying deadline provided, deficiency requests deadline imposed and obsolete requirements eliminated.

HF3738-Slawik (DFL)
E-12 Education
Pre-kindergarten through grade three program grants provided.

HF3739-Rukavina (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Accessible electronic information service for blind and disabled persons sunset repealed.

HF3740-Swails (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Physical therapist licensure examination requirement exemption provided.

HF3741-Dettmer (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Power of attorney requirements and statutory short form modified.

HF3742-Poppe (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Subsurface sewage treatment system training programs offered by private sponsors accreditation required.

HF3743-Nelson (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
School district payroll deduction tax-sheltered annuity vendors collective bargaining required.

Tuesday, March 4

HF3744-Thissen (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Local police and firefighters relief association amortization provisions amended and state aid allocated.

HF3745-Mariani (DFL)
E-12 Education
Student life plans required and involuntary career tracking prohibition repealed.

HF3746-Scalze (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
City transportation utility fee imposition authorized.

HF3747-Heidgerken (R)
Finance
Melrose; regional adult and wellness center funding provided.

HF3748-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Counties allowed to contract with hospitals to provide chemical use assessments.

HF3749-Juhnke (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
State veterans cemeteries authorized and regulated.

HF3750-Morrow (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Driver hours of service provision modified.

HF3751-Zellers (R)
Taxes
Tobacco tax rates decreased, maximum cigar tax established and tax adjustments provided.

HF3752-Hortman (DFL)
Finance
Blind student instructional material equal access; civil remedies provided.

HF3753-Eastlund (R)
Commerce & Labor
Subcontractors' right to payment protection enhanced for work performed on real property owned by the general contractor, and developer and general contractor trust account and lot-specific accounting required to protect subcontractors.

HF3754-Hamilton (R)
Finance
Jackson County nursing facility payment rates increased.

HF3755-Gardner (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Plastic sales that do not meet specifications prohibited; penalties provided.

HF3756-Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Local government aid distribution modified, appropriation limit increased and study provided.

HF3757-Lesch (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Customer liability limited for unauthorized use of lost or stolen cellular phones.

HF3758-Bigham (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Cottage Grove; Trunk Highway 61 roundabout sign placement allowed.

HF3759-Gunther (R)
Finance
Faribault County nursing facility payment rate increased.

HF3760-Gunther (R)
Finance
Martin County nursing facility payment rates increased.

HF3761-Bigham (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Repeat sex offender sentences modified.

HF3762-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Care Advisory Council created.

HF3763-Juhnke (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Veterans Homes Board of Directors functions transferred to commissioner of veterans affairs.

HF3764-Thissen (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Minneapolis firefighters relief association; investment-related postretirement adjustment modified and cost-of-living unit provided to members upon achieving 110 percent funding.

HF3765-Moe (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Dakota and Ojibwe language immersion program task force established for language preservation.

HF3766-Tillberry (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Horse racing; medication regulations modified.

HF3767-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Predatory offender written verification permitted for residence in another state.

HF3768-Laine (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Patient's Bill of Rights amended to include continuous doula support and information about evidence-based non-pharmacological pain relief.

HF3769-Mariani (DFL)
E-12 Education
Compulsory attendance age increased from 16 to 18.

HF3770-Winkler (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Office of Enterprise Technology legislative report required regarding its approval process for state agency technology requests and assistance provided to state agencies in developing agency information system plans.

HF3771-Berns (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Ice hockey designated as the official sport of Minnesota.

HF3772-Bunn (DFL)
Finance
Fiscal note request status disclosure required, fiscal note conclusions appeal provided and revenue estimates appeal provided.

HF3773-Dominguez (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Gang-related crime penalties increased.

HF3774-Dominguez (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Minnesota Residential Mortgage Originator and Servicer Licensing Act application clarified and insurer investment authority clarified.

HF3775-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Sexual assault victim protection law modified.

HF3776-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance
Metropolitan area transit and para-transit capital expenditure additional financing provided, obligation issuance authorized and additional amount maximum authorization limited after July 1, 2007, and after each July 1 thereafter.

HF3777-Lieder (DFL)
Finance
Red Lake County nursing facility payment rate increased.

HF3778-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Nursing facility payment rates increased to offset property tax payments.

HF3779-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Youth violence prevention task force established.

**HF3780-Hornstein (DFL)
E-12 Education**

Comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction definition clarified, pre-kindergarten through grade 6 teacher requirements made and money appropriated.

**HF3781-Jaros (DFL)
Finance**

Unrefunded gasoline taxes ensured to remain in highway user tax distribution fund to be used for highway purposes and dedicated fund requirement removed.

**HF3782-Mahoney (DFL)
Finance**

Office of Science and Technology established in Department of Employment and Economic Development and small business assistance and development provided.

**HF3783-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Insurance fees, coverages, contracts, filings and forms regulated; financial planners, real estate appraisers, domestic mutual insurance companies and collection agencies regulated; and technical and clarifying changes made.

**HF3784-Madore (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Nurse Licensure Compact provided and appointments provided.

**HF3785-Doty (DFL)
Finance**

Morrison County nursing facility payment rates increased.

**HF3786-Olin (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources**

Wetland Conservation Act exemption reinstated for approved development.

**HF3787-Simon (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Civil investigative and licensing data governing provisions modified.

**HF3788-Fritz (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources**

Rice County surplus state land conveyance authorized.

**HF3789-Gardner (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Phosphorous content lawn fertilizer wholesaler retail signage required.

**HF3790-Lesch (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Property filing and conveyance electronic recording provided.

**HF3791-Thissen (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Alcohol use by employees on-site testing authorized.

**HF3792-Hortman (DFL)
Finance**

Commuter rail; transportation commissioner's authority clarified relating to commuter rail, and operation and maintenance of commuter rail lines located in the metropolitan area provided.

**HF3793-Davnie (DFL)
E-12 Education**

Student cooperation with educators policy clarified.

**HF3794-Carlson (DFL)
Finance**

Power of you program established and report required.

**HF3795-Hosch (DFL)
Taxes**

Property tax class 2 classification modified.

**HF3796-Hosch (DFL)
Rules & Legislative Administration**

Council established to prescribe legislator and constitutional officer salaries, compensation council abolished and constitutional amendment proposed.

**HF3797-Seifert (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Unfunded mandates prohibited.

**HF3798-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Minnesota State Retirement System; Public Employees Retirement Association; Teachers Retirement Association; program restrictions provided, annuitant provisions modified, procedures revised and disability provisions modified.

**HF3799-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public pension fund voluntary deductions authorized for persons entitled to receive an annuity.

**HF3800-Hornstein (DFL)
Finance**

Impounded vehicle and contents sale permitted after title transfer; notices provided, right to receive contents without charge established, deficiency claim limited and oversize and overweight tow truck permit provided.

**HF3801-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Finance**

Child support enforcement appropriation increased and child support incentive annual appropriation required.

**HF3802-Ruud (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Complementary and alternative health care client bill of rights exception added for in-patient hospital setting and hospice care.

**HF3803-Tschumper (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Assisted living administrator license required.

**HF3804-Walker (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Homeless Management Information System data required.

**HF3805-Morrow (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division**

Farm vehicles on highways provisions modified, and size, weight and load restrictions on highways provided.

**HF3806-Solberg (DFL)
Ways & Means**

Projected inflation in forecasting state expenditures adjustments required.

**HF3807-Hortman (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Whistleblower additional protection provided to state executive branch employees.

**HF3808-Benson (DFL)
Finance**

Department of Education funding provided for a grant to Minnesota Historical Society to provide professional development for teachers.

**HF3809-Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

State health care program management improved, managed care contracting modified, managed care administrative expenses limited, county-based purchasing modified and mandated reports required.

**HF3810-Gardner (DFL)
Finance**

Minnesota Care self-directed health care pilot option created.

**HF3811-Laine (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Nonprofit health plan company maximum financial reserves specified.

**HF3812-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Public pool and spa anti-entrapment devices or systems required.

**HF3813-Eastlund (R)
E-12 Education**

Pre-kindergarten exploratory project eligibility modified.

**HF3814-Greiling (DFL)
E-12 Education**

Science teachers allowed to obtain a science endorsement licensure by examination by repealing a Board of Teaching rule.

**HF3815-Mariani (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Educational data sharing permitted.

**HF3816-Mariani (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Education agencies allowed to share educational data in order to improve school instruction.

**HF3817-Peterson, S. (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Health insurers required to honor the patient's assignment of benefits.

Wednesday, March 5

**HF3818-Howes (R)
Health & Human Services**

Smoking ban definitions and exceptions added and posted signs required.

**HF3819-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Long-term care workers insurance coverage studied and mandated report required.

**HF3820-Walker (DFL)
Health & Human Services**

Individual and family medical assistance asset limits increased.

**HF3821-Clark (DFL)
Taxes**

Minneapolis; tax increment financing district duration extended, increment distribution provided and neighborhood revitalization program governance structure changes limited.

**HF3822-Dominguez (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Motor vehicle insurance adjustments regulated.

**HF3823-Lillie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Automobile insurers prohibited from owning repair facilities.

**HF3824-Solberg (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Continuing education required hours reduced.

**HF3825-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Injured employee civil remedy permitted if an employer violated safety laws.

**HF3826-Davnie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Board of Thermal System Insulation created, rules required and penalties imposed.

**HF3827-Morrow (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division**

Pupil transportation safety information and questions required in driver's manual and examination.

**HF3828-Hosch (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

Board of Residential Construction created and rulemaking authorized.

**HF3829-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor**

State fair liquor license technical changes made.

**HF3830-Laine (DFL)
Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

State agency providers allowed to impose requirements on clients, and program guideline consistency required.

HF3831-Magnus (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Rock County; appointive office process provided.

HF3832-Peppin (R)
Taxes
Disability accommodation credit provided for vehicle purchase or modification, home modification or improvement and for family caregivers.

HF3833-Erhardt (R)
Finance
Household good motor carrier requirements amended, system of permits changed to registration, obsolete permit governing language removed and clarifying and conforming changes made.

HF3834-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Pharmacy practice provisions modified.

HF3835-Tschumper (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Medium-speed electric vehicles defined, medium-speed electric vehicles required to be registered and titled, and roads identified on which medium-speed electric vehicles may be operated.

HF3836-Rukavina (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
State employee vacation donation program modified.

HF3837-Buesgens (R)
E-12 Education
Continuing contract teachers required to make an election under their collective bargaining agreement.

HF3838-Berns (R)
Environment & Natural Resources
Invasive species provisions modified and civil penalties provided.

HF3839-Lillie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Residential mortgage originators and services regulated and borrower's ability to pay verified.

HF3840-Gunther (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Supplemental retirement plan limitations amended.

HF3841-Hosch (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources
Fishing contest permit requirements modified.

HF3842-Peppin (R)
Commerce & Labor
Gasoline sales below cost regulated.

HF3843-Brynaert (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Renewable energy standard required certain amount of solar-produced energy.

HF3844-Scalze (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Prescription drug bulk purchasing program established, and legislation and implementation drafts required.

HF3845-Bly (DFL)
Finance
Contract alternative schools funding extended.

HF3846-Ward (DFL)
Taxes
Taxable market value increase prohibited for homesteads owned by certain persons age 65 years or older.

HF3847-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Finance
Sexual violence prevention demonstration grants funding provided.

HF3848-Bunn (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Homeowner warranty claim repose statute adjusted.

HF3849-Simon (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Commercial multi-passenger bicycle passengers permitted to consume alcohol.

HF3850-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Domestic abuse advocate testimony limited without consent of victims.

HF3851-Zellers (R)
Commerce & Labor
Unlawful and deceptive trade practices, consumer fraud and false statements in advertising regulated, private remedies modified and application and construction provided.

HF3852-DeLaForest (R)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Interlocutory appeal provided on the question of class certification.

HF3853-Cornish (R)
Commerce & Labor
Bar bingo winner postings required.

HF3854-Nornes (R)
Commerce & Labor
Racetracks allowed outside the seven-county metro area; racetracks allowed to operate card clubs.

HF3855-Lanning (R)
Taxes
Regional emerging investment fund credit and a seed capital investment credit allowed and commissioner duties imposed.

HF3856-Knuth (DFL)
Taxes
New Brighton tax increment financing authorized.

HF3857-Sailer (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Solar energy project conservation improvement expenditures allowed by utilities.

HF3858-Knuth (DFL)
E-12 Education
Outdoor education provided as an elective standard.

HF3859-Thao (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Criminal record expungement law modified.

HF3860-Thao (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Business screening services regulated and civil penalties and remedies provided.

HF3861-Hansen (DFL)
Finance
Metropolitan area sewer inflow and infiltration funding provided.

HF3862-Paymar (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Prisoners facing civil commitment allowed to elect to remain confined in state correctional facilities beyond their scheduled release date.

HF3863-Thissen (DFL)
Public Safety & Civil Justice
Official traffic-control device automatic enforcement authorized.

HF3864-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Collision repair shop licensing standards established.

Thursday, March 6

HF3865-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Academic standards modified to include nutrition and health, nutrition and physical education advisory council created.

HF3866-Hilty (DFL)
Transportation Finance Division
Cumulative suspensions of drivers' licenses halted.

HF3867-Moe (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities reduced tuition funding provided.

HF3868-Lieder (DFL)
Finance
Compressed natural gas excise tax transitional rate corrected.

HF3869-Eken (DFL)
Finance
Long-term care provider rate adjustments provided and individual income tax rates modified.

HF3870-Fritz (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Safe patient handling clinical plan required.

HF3871-Hosch (DFL)
E-12 Education
Social and emotional learning standards grant program created for school districts and money appropriated.

HF3872-Thissen (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Health care reform computer-based model authorized to assess proposal impact and state budgeting approaches study required.

HF3873-Rukavina (DFL)
Health & Human Services
Potential enrollee name release prohibited to health plans for marketing purposes.

HF3874-Anzelc (DFL)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Governmental employers allowed to offer alternative deferred compensation plans and plan contribution increases.

HF3875-Swails (DFL)
E-12 Education
Gifted and talented student services clarified.

HF3876-Atkins (DFL)
Finance
Public defender law school loan repayment program authorized.

HF3877-Haws (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota GI Bill per semester and annual grant amount increased for veterans.

HF3878-Lillie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Life insurance settlements regulated, enforcement provided and criminal and civil penalties prescribed.

HF3879-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Property rights related to wind energy regulated.

HF3880-Beard (R)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Utilities; natural gas used as fuel for generating electricity use and cost recovery limited.

HF3881-Emmer (R)
Health & Human Services
Home disability modification expenses allowed for home and community-based waiver programs.

HF3882-Simpson (R)
Taxes
Lodging definition modified and standardized for lodging tax purposes.

HF3883-Hackbarth (R)
Taxes
Electric generation facility property tax exemption provided.

HF3884-Paulsen (R)
Health & Human Services
Mandated health proposal evaluation process changed and report required.

HF3885-Norton (DFL)
Finance
Teachers of color pilot financial aid program established.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

State of employment

Number of jobs gained in the state between Jan. 31, 2007, and Jan. 31, 2008	15,300
Growth rate, as percent	0.6
National growth rate, as percent	0.7
Minnesota unemployment rate in January, as percent	4.5
Percent below the national rate	0.4
Jobs added in the state in January 2008	8,500
Estimated number of jobs added in professional and business services	4,000
Estimated number of jobs added in trade, transportation and utilities	2,100
Estimated number of construction jobs added	2,100
Total jobs lost in the state construction industry in 2007	5,900
Of every four residential construction jobs, number lost in the past two years	1
State job growth, as percent, since the official end of the last recession in	
November 2001	4.1
National percentage rate	5.5
States with lower unemployment rates in July 2007 than Minnesota	24
States with a lower rate in July 2000	4
Between July 2006 and July 2007, states with larger increases in their	
unemployment rate than Minnesota's 0.8 percent gain	1
Percent of Minnesota's working-age population employed in 2006	70.6
State rank	1
Percent working in 1998	73.3
Percent decrease in job vacancies during the second quarter of 2007	
compared to one year prior	6.3
Job vacancies in the second quarter of 2007	60,170
Estimated number of unemployed workers, as percent, in second quarter 2007,	
for each job vacancy statewide	2.2
One year prior	1.7
Initial unemployment insurance claims in state during January 2008	30,608
Claims in January 2007	35,337
Claims in January 2006	32,526
Estimated employment growth in state, as percent, between 2004 and 2014	12.8
Percent increase in computer and mathematical occupations	30.8
Percent of state manufacturers with 250 employees or less, that responded to a	
survey, that had positions unfilled due to lack of qualified applicants, and	
indicated a moderate or serious worker shortage overall	52

— M. Cook

Sources: Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey; The 2007 Minnesota Skills Gap Survey; and Trends, December 2007 edition, all from the Department of Employment and Economic Development; other department fact sheets; Workers' Compensation State Rankings, 2007 Edition, Actuarial and Technical Solutions, Inc.

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