

SESSION WEEKLY

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CAREER NON-OPPORTUNITIES
COUNTY OPTION ON SALES TAX
FREE FISHING FOR SENIORS
MAKE WAY FOR STIMULUS FUNDS



HF1960 - HF2202

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2009-2010 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: Jason Mandle, 3, who attends the Minneapolis Early Childhood Family Education program, watches the Teddy Bear Band perform March 19 as part of the "Voices for Children Raised at the Capitol."

— Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Minnesota's unemployment rate currently stands at 8.1 percent and rising. Lawmakers have proposed everything from wage subsidy programs to corporate tax cuts to stimulate job growth.

Career non-opportunities

Lawmakers offer conflicting ideas on how to create jobs

By NICK BUSSE

Erick Ajax is the sort of employer that Minnesota wants. The co-owner of the Fridley-based E.J. Ajax and Sons Inc., manages a metal-forming plant that produces, among other things, approximately 70 percent of all the appliance hinges sold in North America.

"If you look at your refrigerator at home, the hinge that holds the door on it was probably made in our plant," Ajax told members of a House division March 19.

Over the years, Ajax — who boasts of not having any minimum-wage jobs in his company — has watched his employees double or even triple their starting wages, raise their families and "live the American Dream as metal-forming professionals." Unfortunately, as with so many other companies, E.J. Ajax and Sons has fallen on hard times.

"In November, the bottom fell out of our market worldwide," Ajax said. "In the last 90 days, we've gone from 50 employees to 21 employees — very, very painful changes that have had to take place in my business."

Those painful changes are not uncommon, as Minnesota and the rest of the country

struggle through what many economists are calling the worst recession since World War II. The state's unemployment rate reached 8.1 percent in February, marking the worst employment figures in more than a quarter-century. In the hardest-hit regions of the state, job-seekers outnumber job openings by a ratio of 11-to-1.

The situation has put job creation at the front and center of the legislative agenda. But while legislators on both sides of the aisle agree that something must be done, they have very different ideas about how to go about it.

Funding vs. fundamentals

As it happens, Ajax was testifying in favor of a bill that could help him hire some of his workers back.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-

Virginia), HF1326 would resurrect a program that helped put some 30,000 unemployed Minnesotans back to work during the tough economic times of the early-1980s. The Minnesota Emergency Employment Development program, as it was called, essentially paid employers a wage subsidy to help them hire new and recently laid-off workers. It lasted from 1983 to 1985, and many of the workers hired under the program were able to keep their jobs after it ended.

Rukavina is betting that a program that worked back then could work again now. He plans to meet with Gov. Tim Pawlenty to discuss the proposal; however, with a state budget deficit looming, he's also being realistic about his chances of getting the \$120 million asked for in the bill.

"If I can't get the money, I can't get the money. But I'm not going to sit on my hands while I know people are hurting out there and not try to do something," Rukavina told members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division. The division laid the bill over March 19 for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Earlier this year, House DFL leaders signaled their commitment to job creation by making HF1, the first bill of the session, a vehicle to receive federal stimulus funds. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, better known as the federal stimulus package, will save or create some 45,000 jobs in Minnesota alone, according to an estimate

First Reading continued on page 4

by State Economist Tom Stinson.

Though such programs might help in the short-term, critics see a problem with proposals like Rukavina's bill and the federal stimulus: they don't last.

"If we prop (job-providers) up with taxpayer dollars, then the minute those dollars are gone, if the fundamentals aren't there to support those jobs, they're going to go away again," said Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud).

Gottwalt knows something about "the fundamentals." Before coming to the Legislature, he spent years helping businesses locate and expand their operations in the St. Cloud area. According to Gottwalt, what businesses are really looking for is an environment in which they can thrive — and that means lowering taxes.

"We do hear from our businesses that they're concerned about the tax environment in Minnesota," Gottwalt said. "You go and talk to any manufacturer in this state — anybody who creates jobs — and they will tell you the tax burden in this state is a significant factor."

A report from the Governor's 21st Century Tax Reform Commission would seem to confirm this. The commission, a panel of mostly business executives established by Pawlenty to review the state's business tax climate, puts Minnesota's combined state and federal corporate tax burden as the third highest in the nation, behind only Iowa and Pennsylvania.

To address the issue, Pawlenty has proposed what he sees as the best way to stimulate private-sector growth: the "Minnesota Jobs Recovery Act," a package of tax incentives that includes a plan to cut the corporate tax rate in half over the next six years. House and Senate Republicans support the proposal.

Although he said the state needs a multi-faceted approach to economic development that includes a focus on infrastructure and creating an educated workforce, Gottwalt warns that legislators ignore the tax issue at their own peril.

"We've got to be careful of how heavy a tax burden and a regulatory burden we place on businesses, because it does make a difference, and they will leave," he said.

To tax or not to tax

Not everyone with expertise in economic development believes in the power of tax cuts, however.

Ann Markusen, a professor at the University of Minnesota and an expert on regional and industrial economics, calls corporate tax cuts "a terrible idea."

Job creation is front and center on the legislative agenda. But while legislators on both sides of the aisle agree that something must be done, they have very different ideas about how to go about it.

To begin with, Markusen said cutting taxes at a time when the state already has a record deficit will only leave an even bigger budget hole for policymakers to deal with. That, in turn, will lead to layoffs in the public sector, which will compound the state's economic problems.

"I don't think it's in businesses' interests to really encourage something that's going to result in further rounds of people spending less money on retail, more foreclosures and so on and so forth," Markusen said.

Even in the long-term, Markusen is skeptical that tax cuts will produce the desired effect of spurring job growth, since there is no guarantee companies will use the money to create jobs. Moreover, Markusen said much of the benefits from a corporate tax cut would flow to stockholders outside of Minnesota.

"I'm in the school — and in fact, most public finance economists believe this — that we're in a race to the bottom on these tax incentives," she said.

Markusen is not completely opposed to tax



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina sponsors a bill that would pay employers a wage subsidy to help them hire new and recently laid off workers. The state had a similar program from 1983-1985.

breaks for businesses. The key, Markusen said, is that incentives have to be tied to specific goals.

"If companies are promising to create a certain number of jobs and quality of jobs, that's something that should be monitored," she said, adding that companies that don't live up to their end of the bargain should be held to account.

"You only want a tax cut to incentivize behavior," she said.

For now, Markusen said a temporary wage subsidy program like the one Rukavina proposed wouldn't be a bad idea. In the long run, she said the state needs to start doing economic development in a way that pays for results, and that looks at all economic development programs, including tax breaks, as state budget expenditures that should be tied to specific outcomes.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley), who serves with Gottwalt on a key House division dealing with workforce development — and who has engaged in frequent debates with his Republican colleague — agrees with Markusen.

"We need to make sure we have a tax and regulatory environment that is neither too heavy nor too light," Winkler said.

Winkler believes that the government's role in promoting economic development should be to ensure that the state has not only a suitable tax environment, but also a robust education system, well-managed infrastructure and other necessities — things that he said the corporate income tax helps pay for.

For the time being, businesses like E.J. Ajax and Sons could continue to hurt.

"We've cut all salaried wages for the management team by 20 percent. We've reduced all remaining employee wages by 10 percent. We've reduced the rent on our building 20 percent. We've had to cut back employee hours to 32 hours a week. We have had to reduce the temperature in our building by 10 degrees," Ajax said. "We're in the race of our lives right now." 🏰

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees and other House activities held March 19-26. 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

Policy on hemp production

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

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee March 25 that North Dakota is taking the lead on challenging federal law.

She sponsors HF608, which would lay out the policy for industrial hemp production in the state. However, Kahn said that nothing could happen until Congress approves the change and the U.S. Department of Justice, and Drug Enforcement Administration actually grant an application.

Approved by the committee, the bill now moves to the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee. Its companion, SF1365, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Hemp production was banned by the 1970

Controlled Substances Act, largely because of fears the plant could mask growth of its cousin, the marijuana plant.

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

Supporters say that products made from industrial hemp grown in Canada are currently available in this country, while others, including Rep. Dave Olin (DFL-Thief River Falls), are still concerned about any relationship with growing marijuana.

— L. SCHUTZ

CONSUMERS

Off-sale Sunday liquor sales

The state could see its revenue increase anywhere from \$4 million to \$10 million annually if a law that goes back to prohibition days is stricken from the books.

Minnesota is one of the few remaining states that retains one of the so-called "blue laws" prohibiting Sunday liquor sales. HF1294, sponsored by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), would change that.

Before the bill was held over March 24 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion, a provision was removed that would have allowed for vehicle sales on Sunday as well.

Supporters of Sunday liquor sales emphasized that all surrounding states have removed the ban, and that stores in border communities lose sales. The change would put them on an even

playing field with their competitors in other states and with on-sale establishments.

"It's about fairness," said John Wolf, owner of Chicago Lake Liquors in Minneapolis. "This antiquated ban is out of step with most Minnesotans. ... It is only fair to admit that there are alcohol sales on Sunday," he said referring to on-sale establishments.

While the ability to be open would be optional, liquor store owners opposing the measure say they will be forced into opening if their competitors do so.

"Sunday is my day off. Sunday is my family day," said Brian Bluhm, owner of Top Ten Wine and Spirits in Cottage Grove. He contends that liquor manufacturers are behind the push, but that "greed is no justification for Sunday sales."

The bill has no Senate companion.

— L. SCHUTZ

CRIME

Increasing booking fees

Since 1997, counties have been permitted to charge up to a \$10 fee for each person booked for county jail confinement or released upon completion of the booking process.

However, Rep. Larry Haws (DFL-St. Cloud) said the fee does not equal the costs.

He sponsors HF1523, which would permit counties to charge an amount sufficient to cover booking costs. It was held over March 24 by the House Public Safety Finance Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion, SF1295, sponsored by Sen.

BALANCING ACTIONS



House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher and House Majority Leader Tony Sertich are surrounded by students of all ages during a March 19 news conference as she points out the difference between the House, Senate and Gov. Tim Pawlenty's four-year budget balancing plans.



PHOTOS BY TOM OLMSCHIED

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert responds to a proposed \$2 billion tax increase in the Senate budget, after distributing the proposal to reporters March 12 in the Capitol press room.

Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"They're using a public facility," said Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder). "It doesn't mean they're terrible people, but they should have to pay their dues."

We look at it as a mandate reduction, said John Tuma, representing the Minnesota Inter-County Association.

Stearns County had almost 8,000 jail bookings in 2005, but took in only \$26,000 because many incidents were book and release, which they cannot charge for, Haws said; nor does the county charge the fee to those who have no money. If people can't pay, a judge could make the fee part of a sentence. If a person is found innocent, they get the money back.

"The fee was put in place back in '97 because of the significant amount of additional things we were asking for our officers to do at the moment of the book," Tuma said.

— M. COOK

EDUCATION

Commonwealth school grants

School districts or other local government entities could join forces to save money by sharing administrative or program services.

Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) sponsors HF895, which would appropriate up to three competitive grants of \$100,000 each for school districts, in groups of three or more, to plan and implement the formation of "commonwealth districts" as a measure to encourage sharing resources among cash-strapped districts. They might share a superintendent, financial management, transportation, food, technology, purchasing and instructional services. The funds would be available for planning in fiscal year 2010 and implementation in fiscal year 2011.

The House K-12 Education Finance Division laid the bill over March 25 for possible omnibus bill inclusion. Its companion, SF440, sponsored by Sen. Dan Skogen (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate E-12 Education Budget and Policy Division.

Menahga Public Schools Superintendent J.R. Nesland said the grants would provide "seed money," which would become an incentive for school boards to analyze, perhaps with the help of a third party, various scenarios for how a commonwealth arrangement could work.

"If I'm going to sit down with five superintendents," Nesland said, "which four of us are going to walk away and say, 'You be the one that stays.' We almost need some incentive sometimes to get us thinking."

Sam Walseth, director of legislative action for

the Minnesota Rural Education Association, called it a "softer, gentler approach" to help districts share than imposing mandates.

Reps. Jerry Newton (DFL-Coon Rapids) and John Ward (DFL-Brainerd) suggested local government units could be included in such an agreement.

Rep. Connie Doecke (R-Orono) suggested an amendment to require that a commonwealth district demonstrate it would save more than the \$100,000 it would receive in a grant. Eken said he would be willing to work with her to incorporate such an amendment so that if it is included in the omnibus bill it would reflect his intent to save schools money.

— K. BERGGREN

K-12 omnibus bill offered

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) said the omnibus K-12 education policy bill maintains the integrity of the Department of Education's policy proposals while incorporating lawmakers' priorities.

Sponsored by Mariani, HF1179 was discussed March 26 by the House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee. A vote was expected that evening.

Significant new provisions would begin to shape a comprehensive statewide policy on the frequency, nature and use of student testing. They include proposals to:

- use and evaluate computer-adaptive testing, which uses interactive technology to adjust a test to the ability of the test taker, allowing results to be quickly used by a classroom teacher to identify and correct instructional gaps;
- continue to expand growth model assessments in addition to proficiency and yearly progress; and
- direct the Office of Educational Accountability to convene a temporary advisory group to examine and make recommendations on the role of high-stakes assessments, such as the math Graduate Required Assessment for Diploma.

The bill would re-align many state special education provisions more closely with federal law, such as dispute resolution and due process hearings that parents may request regarding aspects of special education placement or services provided. It would repeal existing provisions regarding the use of "aversive and deprivation" procedures and replace them with updated definitions and proposals about when certain interventions to manage aggressive student behavior can be used and by whom. It could also repeal the requirement that school districts provide transportation for special education services for nonpublic school students.

School districts would be required to

develop a plan to improve student achievement among all groups of students and designate 5 percent of their basic revenue to implement research-based practices to advance that goal.

Not included in the bill is charter school reform, introduced in HF935, sponsored by Rep. Linda Slocum (DFL-Richfield), nor safe schools levy and maintenance of effort requirements, addressed in HF920, the education mandate reduction bill, sponsored by Rep. Tom Tilberry (DFL-Fridley).

The bill's companion, SF1253, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Wiger (DFL-Maplewood), is scheduled to be heard March 27 by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— K. BERGGREN

Improving difficult interventions

Managing students with severe behavioral challenges requires special knowledge, including techniques involving physical restraint of a student or seclusion in a separate room.

However, these procedures can put a child in harm's way if improperly applied.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) sponsors HF1621, which would require schools to have a plan that defines the emergency situations when such procedures could be used and how they fit into students' individual education plans. It would also limit their use to appropriately trained staff.

Davnie said the bill represents "community consensus on a difficult and troubling issue," and would bring about consistency between the schools and day treatment facilities where some children and teenagers are served alternately.

The House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee laid the bill over March 20 for possible omnibus bill inclusion. Its companion, SF1630, sponsored by Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

What's considered acceptable intervention has evolved significantly, said Sue Aberholden, executive director of National Alliance on Mental Illness-Minnesota. During the mid-1980s, common practices to enforce behavior included skin shock with cattle prods and putting Tabasco sauce on children's tongues.

"Now we would think that would be barbaric," Aberholden said. While restraint and seclusion are effective in certain emergency situations — when a student presents imminent danger to himself or herself, to another student or teacher, or threatens serious property damage — they are too widely used by improperly trained people in situations that don't merit such a response.

Deaths attributed to the misuse of restraint

include that of a 7-year-old Wisconsin girl in 2006. A child in Willmar ate paint chips while in seclusion unsupervised. Others have been left in a “time-out” room for hours without lunch or a bathroom break.

Restraint and seclusion are being used less frequently in favor of more effective positive behavioral support strategies, said Antoinette Johns, Northeast Metro Intermediate District 916 director of special education, even with the most challenging students with serious emotional and behavioral disturbances along with criminal histories or mental illness.

— K. BERGGREN

Schools save by sharing services

A kindergarten basic — learning to share — is a lifelong lesson not lost on school districts that have been sharing purchasing power and administrative services in order to save money.

Now districts are collaborating in other areas. Some are planning a common calendar and daily schedule, coordinating professional development and student activities or forming larger pools to offer better health insurance rates.

Reps. Marsha Swails (DFL-Woodbury) and Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake) recently co-chaired a work group on education shared service, soliciting ideas and information from stakeholders. The resulting bill, HF1665, sponsored by Swails, would establish an online clearinghouse under the state auditor’s purview where school districts, regional education organizations and other government entities could post their best practices and link to service providers.

“We were looking for a common-sense tool for people to use that was not mandated,” McFarlane said. “We know that our school boards and our school administration want to be good stewards of the taxpayers’ dollars, and they already are. ... This is a tool for them to be able to do that.”

The bill was approved in its original form by the House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee March 19 and in an amended version by the House K-12 Education Finance Division March 25. It now awaits action by the House Finance Committee. Its companion, SF1559, sponsored by Sen. Dan Skogen (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

While sharing services isn’t new to school districts, said Minnesota Rural Education Association Executive Director Lee Warne, “House File 1665 creates that opportunity for these ideas to be brought together and have them go viral.”

“They had a really unique idea, and they started by listening to school districts to

actually find out what was going on in shared services,” said Minnesota School Boards Association Director of Governmental Relations Grace Keliher, who attended work group meetings.

“It is common sense. We fully support this,” Keliher said.

— K. BERGGREN

New school reform option

Almost 40 percent of new teachers leave the profession not because they’re dissatisfied with their pay, according to Education/Evolving Managing Partner Curt Johnson, but because traditional schools tend to stifle their creativity and innovation.

Rep. John Benson (DFL-Minnetonka) sponsors a bill that would allow motivated teachers to plan and help run site-governed schools.

“We have been told for a long time what to do, how to do it, when to do it, by all the rules that are placed before us by federal, state and local entities,” said Minneapolis Federation of Teachers President Lynn Nordgren. “Teachers are often the last to be asked about what’s best for kids.”

GREEN FOOD



Starla Krause, a program leader with Kid’s Cook and the Loring Schoolyard Garden, testifies March 25 before the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division in support of a bill that would require green jobs in the food production sector and provide farm-to-school and farm-to-home pilot project funding.

Current charter school law allows teachers to help form schools outside school district authority, while another statute permits school site decision-making agreements allowing for school reform if 60 percent of the licensed employees of a school request such an agreement.

Something of a hybrid, HF751 would allow smaller groups of teachers who envision a different school model to build it more quickly without leaving their district, but with the same exemptions from certain laws and rules as charter schools.

The bill would allow a school board to request proposals from licensed district teachers, parents or community members to create and run site-governed schools that provide alternatives to the traditional district model. Board approval would be needed within 60 days. Teachers would retain their district employment, union status, salary and benefits. Site-governed schools would be accountable for achieving performance standards that would be spelled out in agreements with the school board.

The House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee approved the bill March 24 and sent it to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF486, sponsored by Sen. Kathy Saltzman (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate E-12 Education Budget and Policy Division.

— K. BERGGREN

ELECTIONS

Automatic voter registration

A House committee approved a bill that would make voter registration easy — too easy, according to some Republicans.

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) sponsors HF1053 that would overhaul Minnesota’s voter registration process. In addition to making it easier to update voter records by cross-checking various databases, the bill would automatically register any eligible voter who applies for a driver’s license or a state ID.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie said the goal is to reduce the state’s approximately 600,000 Election Day voter registrations; however, some Republicans argued that simplifying the registration process might not be a good thing.

“I just think this is a fundamental change that we should not be making,” said Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead). “I think voters should have to think about this and act to register, and not have it automatically done for them.”

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) suggested

automatic registration could lead the state “down the road towards compulsory voting.”

Simon responded that voters would still have to actively think and take the initiative to vote; only the registration process itself would be simplified.

In addition to establishing automatic voter registration, the bill would allow elections officials to keep updated voter rolls by:

- using data from the Department of Public Safety to check for non-citizens listed in the statewide voter registration system;
- comparing voter rolls with Social Security databases to check for deceased voters;
- forwarding name changes from the courts system to county auditors, who would then notify individuals with changed names that they have to re-register to vote; and
- requiring the Department of Corrections and the courts to update elections officials on the convictions and civil rights statutes of felons.

The House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee approved the bill March 19 and referred it to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF660, sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action by the Senate State Government Budget Division.

— N. BUSSE

EMPLOYMENT

Hiring help for felons

Having a job can be one of the best ways for an ex-con to turn their life around, those in the corrections industry say.

Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul) sponsors HF1043, which would prohibit a public employer from considering the criminal history of an employment applicant until the person has been selected for an interview.

Employers with a statutory duty to conduct a criminal history background check or consider criminal history in the hiring process would be exempt.

Approved March 20 by the House Crime Victims/Criminal Records Division, the bill was included March 26 by the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee in its omnibus bill. A companion, SF538, sponsored by Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the full Senate.

“It does not eliminate criminal record inquiries or background checks,” said Johnson, who has worked in corrections for more than 30 years. “It lets the person get a foot in the door, put a human face on the applicant, give them a chance to present themselves.”

“Often a person’s criminal background is

DATA PRACTICES



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Former FBI agent and whistleblower Coleen Rowley testifies before the House Crime Victims/Criminal Records Division March 20 in opposition to a bill that would clarify criminal intelligence data under the Data Practices Act.

looked at more closely than the person’s actual skills and qualifications,” said Eric Branson, an employment facilitator at EMERGE Community Development. “I, too, am an ex-felon and have been denied employment by having to check a box. Luckily, I’ve had the support from people willing to speak on my behalf on my past work experiences, as well as found an employer who values my knowledge, skills and experience more than what a piece of paper says that I did in the past.”

A similar program has existed since December 2006 in Minneapolis, leading to decreased costs due to fewer background checks, while not slowing the hiring process.

— M. COOK

Giving veterans interview preference

It’s hard to get your employment foot in the door these days, when, for some positions, candidates by the hundreds are lined up for one or two open positions.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) believes that military service should move a person to the front of the interview line, especially for state employment.

His bill, HF1880, would strengthen the state’s veterans preference law by requiring a

state agency to grant an interview to a veteran or disabled veteran serving after Sept. 11, 2001, if they meet position qualifications.

Severson told the House Veterans Affairs Division March 20 that a recent report to the Legislature shows the number of veterans in state agencies “on a significant decrease.”

Rep. Tim Faust (DFL-Mora) sees a problem. “With the economy the way it is, if you have 200 veterans applying for a job, it might be difficult to interview every single one.” He suggested that an interview formula be developed for job postings. He is also concerned about veterans becoming discouraged by going to “one interview after another” only because the hiring agency is required to interview the veteran.

Approved by the division and the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee March 25, it now awaits action on the House floor. The bill has no Senate companion.

— L. SCHUTZ

ENERGY

Grant request to reduce truck idling

Truck drivers who idle their engines may be eligible for a state grant aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants.

HF877, sponsored by Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), would require the Pollution Control Agency to apply for a federal Environmental Protection Agency grant, available under the State Clean Diesel Grant Program. The program is one of the competitive grant programs included in the federal stimulus package.

Minnesota would request \$1 million so that local companies could buy and install auxiliary power units for their truck fleets. Local grants would be awarded that cover 50 percent of the purchase and installation of the units, which are portable systems that deliver heating, cooling and electricity to the cab without requiring the truck engine to run. Many truck cabs have sleeping compartments for drivers, who idle the engines to heat or cool the compartment.

Amber Backhaus, a lobbyist for the Minnesota Trucking Association, said 77 million gallons of fuel are annually emitted by idling truck engines in Minnesota. The association estimates that the units, which cost between \$1,500 and \$10,000, could reduce fuel emissions by 80 percent. Transit companies could apply for funding for up to half of their fleet, and no more than 20 percent of the money Minnesota receives could go to the same company. Twenty-five percent of Minnesota’s appropriation would be reserved

for companies that own 20 or fewer trucks.

The House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee approved the bill March 19 and referred it to the House Finance Committee for a recommended referral to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. Its companion, SF1203, sponsored by Sen. Paul Koering (R-Fort Ripley), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

Xcel Energy's central corridor model

When work likely begins next year on the Central Corridor light rail transit line to connect Minneapolis and St. Paul downtown districts, Xcel Energy wants to replace the utility infrastructure with new energy technologies and to provide a model for future energy-efficient development planning.

"Along this corridor there is a lot of flat roof space where solar could be demonstrated," Judy Pofert, regional vice president for Xcel Energy, told the House Energy Finance and Policy Division.

HF1434, sponsored by Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul), would establish "mass transit utility zones" where state-of-the-art energy generation and distribution facilities could be located. Its companion, SF1214, sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), was laid over March 24 by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee for further discussion.

Xcel Energy is also proposing supportive legislation to include a large-scale Smart-Grid research and development project, LED lighting, hybrid vehicle plug-ins, biogas options for commercial and industrial customers and solar partnerships with residential and small business customers within the corridor.

All of the corridor-related bills discussed March 23 were held over by the division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HEGARTY

ENVIRONMENT

River corridor modifications proposed

A plan to update a 30-year-old executive order regarding the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area is drawing opposition from riverfront owners who say the modifications could infringe upon their property rights and result in costly fees.

HF424, sponsored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), would direct the Department of Natural Resources commissioner to adopt new rules for the area, which encompasses 25 Twin Cities metropolitan area communities.

The House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee approved the bill March 24 and referred it to the House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. A companion, SF671, sponsored by Sen. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), awaits action by the Senate Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Budget Division.

Hansen said his bill is an opportunity to apply current science and technology, such as mapping data, to provide best management practices for the area.

One of the new rules would require cities and townships to notify the DNR in advance of public hearings for variances, conditional use permits and zoning amendments. Cities and townships would pay a fee to the DNR for reviewing variance requests and could then pass those fees on to the applicants.

Ken Ketter operates a canoe and kayak tour business along the Mississippi River. He does not favor more government restrictions and said riverfront homeowners make better stewards than legislators.

Local governments would retain authority over variance requests, but the DNR could take them or the applicant to court to halt action, said Kent Lokkesmoe, a DNR waters supervisor. To date, that hasn't happened within the corridor, he added.

— S. HEGARTY

Hatcheries, tree farms would close

A plan to eliminate state-owned and operated tree stock nurseries and cool water fish hatcheries by 2012 has drawn interest from the private sector and opposition from state labor unions.

HF1143, sponsored by Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings), would phase out the Department of Natural Resources' production of tree seedlings at two nurseries by reducing the planting by 20 percent each year for the next five years. The nurseries would be appraised for sale and the money deposited into the General Fund. Similarly the same steps would occur with hatcheries that produce walleyes and muskies that are used to stock state fishing lakes.

The bill was laid over for further consideration by the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division March 23. It has no Senate companion.

McNamara said private hatcheries spend 37 percent less than the DNR and often produce superior walleye fingerlings stock. Due to differences in methodologies, the private sector is able to grow more fingerlings per pound and the fish are more consistent in size.

Employees who have worked at the fish hatcheries for decades opposed the bill.

Dennis Blumke, president of AFSCME Local 694, has worked in both the forestry and fish sector of state government for more than 32 years. "Maintaining healthy lakes and forests is a government responsibility," he said.

McNamara said state tree nurseries in Willow River and Akeley are only operating at up to 20 percent of their capacities. By law, they are required to break even, but they lost about \$1 million from 2004 through 2006. About 35 permanent staff and 165 seasonal staff work at the state nurseries. Many are senior citizens from the local communities.

In addition, the DNR collects seeds for sale to private growers. McNamara said the two nurseries are in the same growing zone and do not provide the diversity needed to ensure native and diverse tree stock for planting throughout the state.

— S. HEGARTY

FAMILY

Final respect for domestic partners

Tim Reardon and his partner, Eric, made sure to have all of their legal documents in order when their daughter, Tess, came into their lives. Three months after welcoming their baby girl, Eric was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. A few years later Eric died, and Tim was told by the medical examiner and the cremation society that he didn't have the right to determine what to do with Eric's remains.

"I felt betrayed and angry," Reardon told the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee March 19.

HF454, sponsored by Rep. Erin Murphy (DFL-St. Paul), would add domestic partners to the list of those able to determine the disposition of remains. It was approved and now awaits action by the House Civil Justice Committee. A companion, SF341, sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"The ability to carry out the final wishes of your loved ones is somewhat of a sacred duty," Murphy said. The change would eliminate costly legal documents that are ineffective, she said.

There are many stories across the state of same sex couples that have drawn up documents but they don't provide the same protections as marriage would for a heterosexual couple, said Laura Smidzik, executive director of Project 515, an organization that aims to ensure that same sex couples and their families have equal

— P. OSTBERG

GAME & FISH

Free licenses for elder Minnesotans

A bill that would give anyone at least age 90 a free fishing license is named for a 91-year-old Isle woman who, despite growing up near Lake Mille Lacs, didn't start fishing until well into her 80s.

"I never could go fishing when I lived on the farm by Mille Lacs because we had too much work to do," Irene Long told members of the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division March 23. "Even if you don't catch one, it's a joy to be out there."

Long and a few of her "grandma" friends have been fishing for eight years with Isle Postmaster Gene Miller, who takes the women out in shifts and is paid with Long's homemade fudge. Long has caught a 42-inch northern pike and a 43-inch muskie. Miller has a policy that the women have to reel the fish to the boat in order to take credit for the catch. Two years ago, she reeled in a 54-inch muskie that wiggled so much it tossed the glasses off her face and into the bottom of the boat.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Irene Long, 91, tells members of the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division March 23 how, for a photo, she had a hard time getting her arms around the 54-inch muskie she caught. The division was hearing a bill that would provide free fishing licenses for residents at least 90 years of age.

"I could hardly move my arm for three days," she said.

Long, who lives on a fixed income of \$450 per month, told division members some of the "grandmas" can't afford a license and have stopped going on the trips. Last year, 937 licenses were sold to people age 90 or older.

"I'm hoping that we're going to get to where the seniors don't have to have a license so they can enjoy what's left of their life to go fishing," she said.

HF1712, sponsored by Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson (DFL-Milaca), the so-called "Irene Long Act," was laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill. Its companion, SF1433, sponsored by Sen. Lisa Fobbe (DFL-Zimmerman), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

GOVERNMENT

Accountability for DEED

The state agency charged with overseeing the state's economic development initiatives would be required to do a better job of measuring the impact of its programs, under a bill approved by a House division.

Under HF1785, the Department of Employment and Economic Development would have to measure its return on investment in terms of state dollars spent. The department would also be required to report back to the

Legislature on whether its operations achieved certain goals like reducing unemployment and getting people off welfare.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Kim Norton (DFL-Rochester), said the department currently doesn't provide lawmakers with enough information to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs.

"I just really believe we, as an accountability and oversight Legislature and committee, need information in order to make good decisions, and I just didn't see us getting it," Norton told the House Bioscience and Workforce Development Policy and Oversight Division.

Members on both sides of the aisle liked the idea.

"This concept ought to be in almost everything we do as a state," Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud) said.

The division approved the bill March 24 and referred it to the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division. Its companion, SF1932, sponsored by Senate Minority Leader David Senjem (R-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— N. BUSSE

HEALTH

Hearing testing fee proposed

A \$4 fee increase to the cost of heritable and congenital testing of newborns is being sought to provide a constant source of funding for



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Laura Libby is joined by her 16-month-old son, Blake, as she testifies March 24 before the House Housing Finance and Policy and Public Health Finance Division in support of a bill that would require support services for families with children who are deaf or have hearing loss.

services to families of children with hearing-impaired disorders.

HF1819, sponsored by Rep. Erin Murphy (DFL-St. Paul), would raise the \$101 cost for the blood spot test to \$105. The money would be awarded by the health commissioner to a nonprofit organization, such as Lifetrack Resources, as a contract for service.

The House Housing Finance and Policy and Public Health Finance Division held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill March 24. A companion, SF1512, sponsored by Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

Last year, Lifetrack Resources used General Fund money to serve 929 families with children who have hearing impairment. Rather than ask for another one-time appropriation, the group hopes to receive \$4 from each fee paid for the required newborn testing.

Mary Hartnett, director of the Minnesota Commission of Deaf, Deaf Blind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, said once a child is identified as deaf, the commission's first call is to Lifetrack Resources, which provides parent-to-parent support services.

Laura Libby, the parent of a 16-month-old boy who is deaf, said the services gave her hope and helped her get assistance for her son that she might not otherwise have known about. Libby, who did not know anyone who was deaf prior to the birth of her son, said the agency's Hands and Voices program gave her unbiased and nonjudgmental information about how to raise a child who is deaf. Her son, Blake, entered the program at 6 months of age and his language skills are expected to be on par with hearing children by the time he is 5 years old.

— S. HEGARTY

Sunset date OK'd on marijuana bill

A bill to allow marijuana for medical purposes was approved by another House committee.

Amended and approved 9-6 by the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee March 24, HF292, sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), next goes to the House Finance Committee.

The bill would regulate the use of medical marijuana by setting limits for allowable amounts, requiring patients and caregivers to possess registry identification cards, and specifying penalties for violations.

Proponents say medical marijuana would provide relief to people for whom other treatments do not work; opponents say it opens the door to increased drug abuse.

Rep. Karla Bigham (DFL-Cottage Grove) successfully amended the bill to reduce the



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Behind a pile of processed marijuana, Bob Bushman, president of the Minnesota State Association of Narcotics Investigators, testifies before the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee March 24 in opposition to a bill that would provide medical marijuana use. The bags of marijuana were brought to the committee as a visual aid to show how much a person could grow if they had 12 plants.

number of marijuana plants a person could have from 12 to six.

An amendment successfully offered by Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Red Wing) would require the health commissioner to begin issuing registry identification cards and registered organization licenses by Oct. 1, 2009. It would also put an Oct. 1, 2011, sunset on the bill.

Kelly said that would allow the state "to put this kind of in a petri dish and have us come back to see if all of these issues, whether bad or good, came out. We would have the ability to address them then and have this discussion again and see if what we're doing is the right thing to do."

Rukavina said none of the 13 states that permit medical marijuana use has tried to repeal this.

A companion, SF97, sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. COOK

HIGHER EDUCATION

Guaranteed tuition rates

Students at public colleges and universities would be protected from tuition increases while they finish their degrees, under a proposal being considered by a House division.

Under HF1374, undergraduates enrolled in the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system would be guaranteed a fixed rate of tuition for up to four years. The bill's

sponsor, Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), said the change would give families a degree of certainty as they try to plan their finances.

"It does provide a tool where a prospective college student and their families can make long-term comparisons in the cost of their college education," Buesgens said.

He added that the four-year time limit (two years for associate degrees) on the fixed rate would provide a "built-in incentive" for students to finish their education on time.

There may be a catch, however: fixed tuition rates would likely mean higher tuition rates, because schools would charge more at the outset to compensate for their inability to raise tuition.

"This bill will not save students or families money," said Peter Zetterberg, a senior analyst for undergraduate education at the University of Minnesota. "If anything, a system like this ... will probably make tuition a little higher than might otherwise be the case."

According to Zetterberg, the university had an optional fixed-rate tuition program from 1995 to 2005. It even offered to pay students back the difference if they ended up paying more than those who weren't in the fixed-rate program. Despite this, Zetterberg said the program was discontinued because of "surprisingly little interest."

The House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over March 19 for possible inclusion in its omnibus finance bill. There is no Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

Loan forgiveness for vet grads

Many students graduating from veterinary school leave with approximately \$130,000 of debt. While there is no shortage of those seeking a degree in the field of veterinary medicine, the vast majority choose the lucrative small animal specialty after graduation. The consequence is that fewer veterinarians are locating in rural communities to service the large- or food-animal practice.

There are approximately 2,500 veterinary medicine graduates annually from the 28 colleges in the United States, including the University of Minnesota, that offer the degree. Trevor Ames, dean of the university's College of Veterinary Medicine, told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee March 23 that the number of graduates choosing to serve in a food-animal practice has dropped by 50 percent in the last decade.

According to statistics from the American Veterinary Medical Association, he said there are four Minnesota counties with over 25,000 in animal population that have no veterinarians.

To entice veterinary students to serve in underserved rural areas, HF1447 would provide a loan forgiveness incentive. The bill calls for a \$225,000 appropriation from the General Fund in fiscal year 2010.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie), the bill would create a program to pay down loans for up to five graduates of the university's veterinary program who agree to devote at least half of their practice to large- or food-animal care. The graduate would need to serve at least five years in an underserved area to receive up to \$15,000 a year, or up to a \$75,000 maximum.

"This bill is kind of the capstone on what we are doing to recruit, mentor adequately train and provide financial incentives (for students) to go into these underserved areas," Ames said.

Approved by the committee, the bill was referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs Finance Division. The companion, SF132, sponsored by Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel), was held over by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Budget and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— L. SCHUTZ

HOUSING

Steady funding to end homelessness

Establishing an annual General Fund base amount to end homelessness, rather than

relying on one-time appropriations, is the goal of Rep. Jeff Hayden (DFL-Mpls), sponsor of HF1491.

The bill would designate \$5.35 million during the 2010-2011 biennium to address homelessness throughout Minnesota and each biennium thereafter.

"All of these programs could use funds beyond this amount to serve our most vulnerable population. This bill just sets the floor so Minnesota's homeless don't have the rug pulled out from under them," Hayden told the House Housing Finance and Policy and Public Health Finance Division March 24. The bill was held over for possible omnibus bill inclusion. There is no Senate companion.

Beginning July 1, 2009, \$1 million would be appropriated annually for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act to help provide shelter or housing for children during "crucial moments of their development," said Kirsten Anderson-Stembridge, policy coordinator for Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. A 2007 appropriation of the same amount served 7,067 children.

Another \$3 million would be added to the base appropriation for programs that address long-term homelessness. Some of the recipients need help for up to 10 years to overcome the effects of mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, joblessness and other factors related to homelessness.

Beginning in fiscal year 2010, the bill would appropriate \$750,000 for transitional housing programs and another \$600,000 for emergency services grants. Both amounts would be added to future base appropriations.

Currently the state spends about \$13 million on homelessness issues. Advocates said thousands are turned away each night due to lack of facilities, and 134 homeless people died last year, according to Sue Watlov Phillips, executive director of Elim Transitional Housing.

"We are spending more on data collection than we are on shelter in the state of Minnesota with the governor's proposed budget. We need good data, but we cannot be spending more money collecting data about homeless people than sheltering people that are experiencing homelessness," Phillips said.

— S. HEGARTY

Fighting foreclosure problems

Areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul hit hard by foreclosures in recent years have seen a lot of formerly owner-occupied houses turned into rental properties. According to Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls), the change has taken a toll on the neighborhoods.

"With the foreclosures, people are coming in, buying them real cheap and turning them

into problem properties with tenants that aren't committed to the area," Mullery said.

As a result, areas like the Jordan neighborhood in north Minneapolis, which has seen its share of rental properties go from 21 percent to 49 percent, have seen an uptick in crime, stresses on the local school system and an increase in social problems.

To address the problem, Mullery sponsors HF157 that would allow cities to adopt ordinances providing for "owner-occupied" residential use. In other words, cities could prohibit buyers from scooping up foreclosed properties only to rent them out. The bill is designed to only apply to cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul that have been hit especially hard by the crisis.

"This would be another tool in our toolbox that would help cities with this issue," said Gene Ranieri, intergovernmental relations director for the city of Minneapolis.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) expressed concern that the bill would shut out the only potential buyers of foreclosed properties, arguing that tightened mortgage lending restrictions have reduced the ability of low-income Minnesotans to purchase homes of their own.

Mullery responded that it would be better to have the houses sit vacant until a responsible buyer could be found than to have them turned into problem properties. He said there are many programs available to help people purchase homes in low-income neighborhoods.

The House Local Government Division approved the bill March 23 and referred it to the House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee. There is no Senate companion.

— N. BUSSE

HUMAN SERVICES

Raising adult foster home capacity

Adult foster homes could raise their capacity from four to five residents, under a bill approved March 19 by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee.

Currently an adult foster care holder can have five persons only under special circumstances, such as an emergency crisis.

Sponsored by Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona), HF1114 awaits action by the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division. A companion, SF1155, sponsored by Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

Dennis Theede, executive director of Home and Community Options Inc., said providers

over the last five years have continually struggled with their budgets. Considering Gov. Tim Pawlenty's suggested 3 percent cut to their programs, the change would be a compromise while maintaining stability in services, he said.

The alternative is cutting the number of staff, which would decrease the number of community outings and other activities for those with disabilities. Adding a fifth person is "not a good long-term fix," but it would allow providers more flexibility in where they make cuts, Theede added.

Heidi Hamilton, a program administrator with the Human Services Department, said the change would only occur if there is a legislative reduction in adult foster care. The counties would negotiate with providers on how those cuts would occur, she said.

Kirsten Anderson-Stembridge, policy and advocacy coordinator for Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, said providers should be able to recoup the savings. "We are very fearful in this environment, as we anticipate cuts," but want to provide quality service to those with disabilities, she added.

— P. OSTBERG

Public assistance made private

Adults covered by MinnesotaCare would be moved to private coverage, under a bill approved March 25 by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud), HF1865 would establish a "Healthy Minnesota Plan" that would allow adults to enroll in their choice of individual health plans under contract with the Human Services Department. If a person doesn't qualify for the program, they would be covered under the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association. HMP services could cover up to a maximum of \$5 million that would include: eyewear coverage, maternity labor and delivery, dental coverage, prescriptions and preventive care.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF1735, sponsored by Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

MinnesotaCare costs about \$500 per adult, per month. Under HMP, a healthy 50-year-old male would cost about \$237 a month, said Greg Sailer, managing consultant for the Minnesota Association of Health Underwriters.

"The intent of this plan is to provide MinnesotaCare level of benefits, and then some," said Gottwalt. Additionally, services would be paid at private rates. Public programs currently don't pay providers sufficiently, causing cost shifting to other consumers, Gottwalt added.

NEWBORN SCREENING



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Jennifer Arveson, left, and Tracie Christopherson testify March 23 before the House Civil Justice Committee in support of a bill that would modify newborn screening program provisions. Both women have children who would have died had it not been for newborn screening, they said.

"Ultimately we ought to have a health care system where the public programs pay the providers the same as everybody else," said Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth).

If the state pays higher rates for services in public programs, health plans should shift less cost onto other consumers, added Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls), the committee chairman.

Phillip Griffin, representing PreferredOne and UCare Minnesota, said providers are already trying to deal with rising costs and struggling to continue current programs.

— P. OSTBERG

Childhood asthma relievers

Children enrolled in MinnesotaCare could have certain asthma reducing medical equipment paid for under a bill approved March 24 by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee.

Asthma is the number one cause for children missing school, said Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls), sponsor of HF264. Clark said the low-cost products would save money in the long run resulting in fewer doctor and emergency room visits.

Medical equipment covered would include high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaners, HEPA vacuum cleaners, allergy bed

and pillow encasements, high filtration filters for forced air gas furnaces and dehumidifiers that connect to floor drains.

A medical equipment study conducted by the Health Department showed that children's hospital visits declined by an average of one visit over a three-month period, unscheduled office visits by two visits, as well as a reduction in daytime and nighttime symptoms when certain products were used in the home, said Laura Oatman, a research scientist with the department.

On average, a child with asthma missed seven school days in a three-month period, Oatman said. That declined to less than one day 12 months later under the study, a cost savings of about \$1,900 per child.

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) successfully amended the bill to not include all insurance programs and only incorporate those that use public assistance for those under age 21. He additionally requested that Clark add to the bill an education requirement to teach families how to properly use the medical equipment.

Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague) asked how the department would deal with smoking and pets in the home.

Oatman said they ask the family member if they would enroll in a smoking cessation program, and ask if they can find another home for pets.

The bill now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF178, sponsored by Sen. Linda Berglin (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

County gets parkland money

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Stearns County can now receive the \$492,000 it was slated to get through last year's capital investment law for land acquisition for new parks and trails.

Effective March 24, 2009, the new law, signed one day earlier by Gov. Tim Pawlenty, makes a technical correction to last year's law that named the Central Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Coordination Board as recipient of the money; however, the board cannot own land.

Sponsored by Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph) and Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville), the money will now go directly to Stearns County, so that 23 acres adjacent to Warner Lake Park can be integrated into the Central Minnesota Parks and Trails.

HF56*/SF55/CH7

— L. SCHUTZ

Local disaster assistance fund

Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter) hopes to eliminate what has become an almost perennial happening at the Legislature: communities being forced to beg lawmakers for money to clean up after a tornado, flood or other disasters.

HF1378 would create a \$6 million local disaster assistance fund to help local governments deal with the aftermath of disasters that don't qualify for federal aid. Under the bill's provisions, local governments could apply to the state for financial assistance in the wake of an incident. Officials from the Department of Public Safety's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division would evaluate applications and could authorize grants from the fund.

"The way we do this now is we get up on the House floor or we go to a committee and a member makes an impassioned plea for a community to get money. What we're trying to do here is put in a process and a procedure with criteria judged by the experts," Morrow said.

The bill would require local governments to provide a 10 percent match for any state aid; however, some members questioned whether that was enough.

Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) said that while he liked the idea of a disaster assistance fund, he worried that it might lead cities and counties to expect the state to always pick up the tab. He suggested the bill should include a specific cost threshold that disasters would have to meet to qualify for state assistance.

A separate provision in the bill would increase base funding for the state to match Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster assistance payments to \$5.6 million per year.

The House Local Government Division approved the bill March 20 and the House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee approved it March 26. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF1270, sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— N. BUSSE

METRO AFFAIRS

Bonding for Met Council needs

Two House committees approved a bill that would allow the Metropolitan Council to issue up to \$34.2 million in bonds for capital expenditures.

State law requires the council, the

planning agency serving the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area, to receive legislative approval to issue regional bonds for transportation purposes.

Sponsored by Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview), HF1333 was approved March 23 by the House Finance Committee, six days after approval by the House Transportation Finance and Policy Division. It awaits action by the House Taxes Committee. A companion, SF1851, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

Judd Schetnan, the council's government affairs director, said the money would be used in 2010 for things like fleet purchases, park-and-ride lot construction or expansion and other capital needs to help the regional transit programs operate more efficiently. It also provides local match to federal transit money and funds projects that are not eligible for federal dollars.

"Because many of the bus-related capital items do not have a 30-year life span, we're not able to use general-obligation bonds," he said. "The Legislature, years ago, gave us the authority to use these regional bonds. They are only for capital purposes."

Schetnan said the money also goes toward Metro Mobility and suburban transit providers.

Bonds are repaid through property taxes levied within the council's Transit Taxing District. "We only issue so much debt in a way that we keep our property taxes flat," Schetnan said. "Every year we retire roughly the equivalent of what we are seeking at the Legislature."

— M. COOK

One girl's dream for veterans

E'leese Madgett-Manrique is on a mission to build a ranch for returning Minnesota veterans in need of respite.

The idea came to the 12-year-old Plymouth girl during a 2007 trip to the Grand Canyon after questioning her mom about all the American flags she saw hanging from mailboxes. Her mom, Kerry Madgett, surmised they were displayed by proud parents of sons or daughters in the military. Her daughter decided to do something for those who serve, and the idea for a ranch was born. Her mom, however, cautioned about the importance of carrying through with any plan. "You can't tell families of sons and daughters in harm's way that you are going to do something and then just quit," she told her daughter.

Last summer one girl, her horse, and her mom went on one long ride to draw attention to her cause and as a fundraiser. From their 86-day journey around Minnesota,



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Sarah Anderson wipes a tear as E'leese Madgett-Manrique, left, tells members of the House Veterans Affairs Division March 20 about her emotional encounters with veterans as she rode her horse around the state. Kerry Madgett, right, and E'leese of One Girl One Ride are attempting to have state land designated for use by veterans.

they raised \$15,000 for the One Girl, One Ride organization formed to promote "The Ranch."

On March 20, the mother/daughter team was before the House Veterans Affairs Division taking the next step needed to bring the ranch to reality — asking support for HF1884.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth), asks the Department of Natural Resources by Jan. 15, 2010, to designate 1,000 acres of state-owned vacant land for use by military veterans in need of healing. Approved by the division, it awaits action by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

"The ranch would not be fancy," E'leese Madgett-Manrique said. "It will be humble, just like the men and women who serve our country."

She plans another ride on June 6, when over 1,000 participants are expected to ride the 20.7 miles from the State Capitol to Plymouth. "My job will not be done until the ranch is built and the first man or woman checks in," she said.

The bill's companion, SF1741, sponsored by Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnestricta), awaits

action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

RECREATION

Non-resident ATV trail pass

Non-resident all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts may be able to ride off into the sunset with one less hassle thanks to a bill approved March 19 by the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee.

Currently ATV owners who are not required to register their machines in their home state must register the machine at a Minnesota registrar's office before riding on state trails.

Citing complexity for visitors who must find an open registrar's office, Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) sponsors HF487 that would establish a non-resident trail pass. The bill would only affect non-residents from states without an ATV registration requirement. Those who do register in their home state/country are exempt from Minnesota registration requirements.

Authorized electronic licensing stations, such as convenience stores, would sell the passes. Each person riding the vehicle would need a \$20 trail pass, except when riding double occupant models, in which case only the operator would need a pass.

The current ATV registration fee is \$45 for a three-year period compared to a cumulative \$60 in trail pass fees over the same period.

The committee referred the bill to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. Its companion, SF1064, sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

SAFETY

Saying no to REAL ID

Civil liberties and privacy issues versus national security and federal accessibility are at the heart of a bill vetoed last year by the governor, but supporters hope to put on his desk once again.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) sponsors HF988, which would prevent the Department of Public Safety from taking any steps to implement or plan for implementation of the federal REAL ID Act of 2005.

The House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee approved the bill March 24 and sent it to the House Civil Justice Committee. A companion, SF738, sponsored by Sen. Warren Limmer (R-Maple Grove),

awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

A recommendation by the 9/11 Commission, the act's goal is to create uniform standards for documents such as driver's licenses and state identification cards, making them harder to forge, and thereby reducing identity fraud and tightening immigration standards.

Residents of states that do not adopt the federal standards by the end of this year would not be able to use their license or identification cards for federal purposes, such as boarding commercial aircraft or entering a federal building.

Charles Samuelson, executive director of the Minnesota chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said the act is unconstitutional. "It burns American's right to travel, which has been recognized as a right by the U.S. Supreme Court under the First Amendment."

Mariani expressed concern with the state giving large amounts of personal data to the federal government. "We'd be handing over to legislators in Washington D.C. to make important decisions relative to our data privacy issues that arise in terms of collecting information on our driver's license," he said. "We want these rights reserved for the states."

In an effort to compromise after vetoing the 2008 bill, Gov. Tim Pawlenty issued an executive order that would prevent state compliance before June 1, 2009, unless legislative approval is first given. He hoped the time would allow all sides to reach a compromise on issues such as federal funding, privacy and state control.

— M. COOK

TRANSPORTATION

Speeding without a record

Fewer speeding violations could end up on state driving records.

Under current law, a ticket does not appear on someone's driving record if the person was driving up to 10 mph over the speed limit in a 55 mph zone, or 5 mph over the limit in a 60 mph zone.

Sponsored by Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), HF1246 would add the 10 mph threshold to the 60 mph limit.

"This really isn't going to change anything, at least not significantly," Urdahl said. "The only thing it will change is that there won't be reporting to the state and that insurance companies will not up the rates on all these people." He emphasized the bill has nothing to do with raising speed limits.

The bill was held over March 23 by the

House Transportation and Transit Policy and Oversight Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion, SF1841, sponsored by Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

Enacted in 1986, the “Dimler amendment,” named for its sponsor, former Rep. Chuck Dimler (R-Chanhassen), governs which speeding violations are recorded on a driving record maintained by the Department of Public Safety.

The proposal was successfully amended onto last year’s House omnibus transportation policy bill, but the provision was removed in conference committee.

State Traffic Engineer Sue Groth said the increase would send the message that it is OK to drive 10 mph over the speed limit. “Speed and aggressive driving are critical in fatal and life-changing crashes on all of our highways. ... Illegal and unsafe speed is the greatest factor among our younger drivers.”

State Patrol Maj. Michele Tuchner said the two things that deter people from driving fast are they don’t want a ticket on their driving record and they don’t want to lose their license.

“You still get a ticket for speeding with this bill,” said Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston).

— M. Cook

Don’t block the box

Drivers who try to sneak through a congested intersection without adequate room on the other side only to end up partially blocking a lane of oncoming traffic or a crosswalk when a stoplight changes could be ticketed.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) said HF1672 is an effort to keep traffic moving during heavily congested times in downtown Minneapolis — such as rush hour, after a largely attended sporting event at the Metrodome or when the snow flies — but would apply for all cities.

The bill was held over March 24 by the House Transportation and Transit Policy and Oversight Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion, SF1349, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

“Getting people successfully in and out of the city’s downtown core is vital to the health of our downtown and the many businesses that call Minneapolis home,” Davnie said. “Everyone wins if drivers respect the ability of cross traffic to move unimpeded.”

Mary Ellen Heng, assistant Minneapolis city attorney, said current law does not fit “blocking the box” behavior. “The law is written that you’re impeding traffic if driving

TREE TRUST



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Princess McGary, left, Samantha Kouman, right, and Jose Salinas tell the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division March 19 that they had just come from a work site that is part of the Tree Trust Youth Build program. The youth training program is seeking additional funding.

at a slow speed. Well, these drivers are not driving at any speed; they are literally parked in the intersection.”

Minneapolis Police Lt. E.T. Nelson said there could be a variety of ways to handle enforcement. He said in critical traffic times, such as rush hour or an emergency situation, the person blocking the intersection would be pulled over.

The penalty would be a petty misdemeanor, subject to a fine similar to speeding. Pierre Willette, a government relations representative for the city, said the goal is not to write tickets, but rather to get compliance and keep traffic moving.

— M. Cook

OK to spend federal dollars

Current statute prohibits the Department of Transportation from spending money without legislative approval.

With hundreds of millions in potential federal economic stimulus dollars heading to the state, a quick change is needed.

Sponsored by Rep. Bernie Lieder (DFL-Crookston), HF1797 allows the state to spend the stimulus dollars through the creation of a standing appropriation for MnDOT for any initial or future funds. It would expire June 30, 2013.

Approved 113-19 March 26 by the House, it now goes the Senate, where Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) is the sponsor.

“This lets us spend federal stimulus money even when the Legislature is not in session,” Kevin Gray, MnDOT chief financial officer, previously told a House committee. The possibility exists of the state getting additional dollars when money for other states is returned and reallocated to another state. Some money has to be used within 90 or 120 days of receipt, Lieder said.

The bill requires compliance with all federal requirements for the aid and orders department officials to “make every reasonable effort to seek and utilize” all funding available.

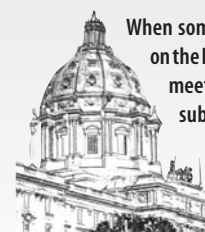
“Are we telling the department that no matter what they should go after money, even if it doesn’t fit into our transportation plans or it’s not something we want to subsidize the operating on?” Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) asked the House Transportation Finance and Policy Division March 17.

“The Metropolitan Council’s budget of 2009 went up millions of dollars unexpectedly due to ongoing obligations that they hadn’t anticipated with the Northstar rail, including salaries and benefits of employees,” Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) told the House Finance Committee March 20.

The bill also deletes a state match for any aeronautics projects, because current state law requires a 20 percent local match. It also requires the commissioner to spend no more than 17 percent on administrative costs like engineering, right-of-way acquisition or environmental assessments.

— M. Cook

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Giving back local control

Counties could have option to impose sales tax

By SONJA HEGMAN

Though they know that sales tax is regressive, the House tax chairs are proposing it anyway as a way for counties to raise revenue.

With property taxes expected to surpass the income tax as the No. 1 revenue source in the state in fiscal year 2010 and massive cuts to various county aids proposed to help with the state's multi-billion dollar budget deficit, Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth) said he had to get a little creative.

HF2020, sponsored by Marquart, the House Property and Local Sales Tax Division chairman, would give counties the option to impose a half-cent local option sales tax to offset cuts to county aid.

"This is a serious and bold proposal and an important option for counties," he said.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), House Taxes Committee chairwoman, said this proposal, along with HF1782, which

eliminates corporate tax credits, would be a foundation for the House omnibus tax bill.

Marquart unsuccessfully tried to pass legislation in 2007 that would base property tax payments on a person's ability to pay, a measure that would have made the system more progressive.

Marquart said his current bill would raise more than \$100 million in the upcoming biennium and \$200 million in the 2012-2013 biennium. This would mitigate some state cuts anticipated to local government aid, which is often used to pay for essential services, like police.

The half-cent option could be adopted by a majority vote of a county's commissioners. The tax could be overturned in a countywide

referendum that would take place if 5 percent of the county's registered voters or 300 people, whichever is greater, called for one.

Currently there are 23 cities with a local option sales tax. Any cities in counties that passed the half-cent increase would lose their local option sales tax, Marquart said. Counties would then be obligated to fund projects that had been funded through the city tax. Only three cities could be exempt from the elimination: Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth.

But counties would have a stable and growing revenue source, with more than half the money going to property tax relief, Marquart said.

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the bill would also repeal levy limits for cities, because the cities would not benefit from the local option sales tax. Counties that chose to impose the tax would not be able to levy back cuts to county aid through property taxes. Counties that do not impose a sales tax increase could levy that money back onto property taxes to make up for the cuts.

Marquart, along with Lenczewski, said they crafted a bill that would be similar to what Gov. Tim Pawlenty has signed in the

Property taxes continued on page 23

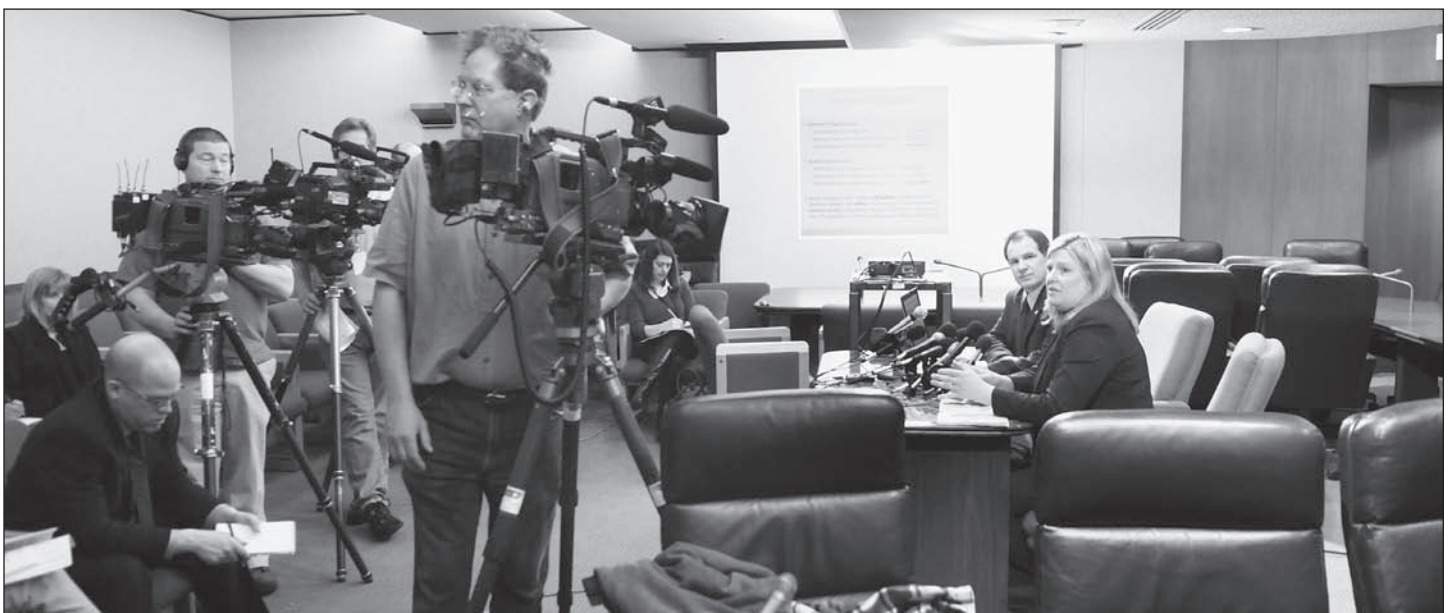


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Paul Marquart, chairman of the House Property and Local Sales Tax Division, and Rep. Ann Lenczewski, chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee, release their property tax plan during a March 23 news conference.

Monday, March 23

HF1960-Obermueller (DFL) Civil Justice

Alternative statutory short form created for military members who are in active service.

HF1961-Lillie (DFL) Civil Justice

Media coverage authorized in trial court proceedings.

HF1962-Kohls (R) Public Safety Policy & Oversight

Juvenile petty offender parents allowed probation supervisory duties.

HF1963-Winkler (DFL) Higher Education & Workforce Development Finance & Policy Division

Early warning system employers provided new requirements; new penalties applied for any employer failing to comply with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, United States Code, title 29, section 2101; and oversight authority enhanced.

HF1964-Faust (DFL) K-12 Education Policy & Oversight

Q-Comp and staff development program alternative and early intervention services integrated.

HF1965-Buesgens (R) State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections

County governments allowed to opt out of state mandates.

HF1966-Sterner (DFL) Finance

Persons serving in active service or retired from active service application fees waived.

HF1967-Haws (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Park and trails legacy grant program established and appointments provided.

HF1968-Gottwalt (R) State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections

Public employee annual salaries that exceed \$100,000 modified during the biennium ending June 30, 2011.

HF1969-Bunn (DFL) Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division

Trucks prohibited on Stillwater Lift Bridge and agreement with state of Wisconsin required.

HF1970-Solberg (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Motor vehicle operation ordinances required.

HF1971-Abeler (R) Taxes

Anoka; tax increment financing districts established under special rules.

HF1972-Juhnke (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Horse trail pass requirements modified.

HF1973-Wagenius (DFL) Finance

Lower Minnesota River biological assessment funding provided.

HF1974-Marquart (DFL) Taxes

Historic structure rehabilitation expenditure income tax credit provided.

HF1975-Marquart (DFL) Taxes

Senior citizen property tax deferral program modified.

HF1976-Koenen (DFL) Taxes

Levy limits abolished.

HF1977-Mullery (DFL) Finance

State agency hiring and contracting provisions enacted under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

HF1978-Obermueller (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Eagan; acquiring land authorized and subject to reversion to state to be used for a co-location facility.

HF1979-Morgan (DFL) Taxes

Sales tax exemption provided for energy-efficient equipment for restaurants.

HF1980-Davnie (DFL) Taxes

Digital products taxed.

HF1981-Kahn (DFL) State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections

Minnesota Geospatial Information Office created.

HF1982-Anzelc (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Carbon sequestration forestry report required.

HF1983-Kahn (DFL) State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections

Minneapolis Firefighters Relief Association; number of representatives on the board of trustees modified.

HF1984-Sterner (DFL) Finance

Minnesota Zoo funding provided.

HF1985-Dean (R) Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division

Municipal state-aid street fund allowed to be distributed to cities with a population under 5,000, conforming changes made and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1986-Peterson (DFL) Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight

Registration and licensing provisions changed for housing with service establishments and entities under the Human Services Licensing Act.

HF1987-Hortman (DFL) Finance

Homebuyer savings plan trust established; income and franchise tax deductions provided.

HF1988-Murphy, E. (DFL) Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight

Managed care plan and county-based purchasing plan provider reimbursement rate information report required.

HF1989-Hayden (DFL) Finance

Housing Solutions Act provided, deed tax percentage adjusted, rental housing assistance provided and housing account for leverage opportunity established.

HF1990-Murphy, E. (DFL) Finance

Surcharge for certified birth records established and funds appropriated to the commissioner of health.

HF1991-Scalze (DFL) Environment Policy & Oversight

Coal tar prohibited, notification and planning required.

HF1992-Johnson (DFL) Finance

Solar cities working group established and report required.

HF1993-Clark (DFL) Energy Finance & Policy Division

Minneapolis; utility poles treated with or containing pentachlorophenol prohibited.

HF1994-Seifert (R) Environment Policy & Oversight

Drilling and installation of a vertical direct exchange system authorized.

HF1995-Sterner (DFL) Public Safety Policy & Oversight

Alcohol concentration limit for commercial driving reduced from .04 to .03 percent.

HF1996-Sterner (DFL) Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Alcohol and chemical dependency counseling services availability required for recently discharged veterans.

HF1997-Abeler (R) Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight

County mandate relief provided, children's mental health, general assistance medical care, family services collaboratives, MFIP and county funeral expenses provisions modified.

HF1998-Paymar (DFL) Taxes

Income tax rates increased.

HF1999-Haws (DFL) Finance

Regional public library system maintenance of effort provisions adjusted.

HF2000-Cornish (R) Public Safety Policy & Oversight

Peace officer firearm discharge reporting modified.

HF2001-Olin (DFL) Taxes

State-paid property tax credit for property in bovine tuberculosis management zones modified.

HF2002-Dean (R) Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight

General assistance medical care, Medical Assistance and Minnesota-Care billing and collections direction provided.

HF2003-Morrow (DFL) Finance

Minnesota transit providers' schedule of state payments for operating procedures modified.

HF2004-Hortman (DFL) Finance

Coon Rapids; bicycle and pedestrian trail grant funding provided.

HF2005-Kelly (R)**Finance**

Red Wing; Southeast Technical College land acquisition funding provided.

HF2006-Champion (DFL)**Finance**

Road authorities required to mitigate construction impacts on small businesses, and construction mitigation grant program established.

HF2007-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Capacity building grants funding provided.

HF2008-Persell (DFL)**Finance**

Pupil miles transported component added to the general education revenue formula.

HF2009-Laine (DFL)**Finance**

Emergency services grants and transitional housing funding provided.

HF2010-Dettmer (R)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Watershed districts required to submit information to counties; county approval of levies and fees required.

HF2011-Magnus (R)**Taxes**

Production tax rate decreased.

HF2012-Brown (DFL)**Finance**

Shooting Star Trail funding provided.

HF2013-Drazkowski (R)**Civil Justice**

Children's equal parenting access act provided and rebuttable presumption established.

HF2014-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Clean water fund appropriations allocated for clean water legacy and drinking water protection activities; star farms proposal report required.

HF2015-Dettmer (R)**Taxes**

Property taxes; limited market value extended.

HF2016-Buesgens (R)**State & Local Government****Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Anoka and Washington counties exempted from certain land plan requirements.

HF2017-Winkler (DFL)**Finance**

Perpich Center for Arts Education programs, services and current funding level maintained; moratorium on new education arts centers established.

HF2018-Falk (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Intervenor compensation provided in certificate of need proceeding.

HF2019-Falk (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Wind energy conversion systems capacity over which counties have authority to issue site permits increased.

HF2020-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

County local sales taxes authorized, certain existing local sales taxes eliminated, county program aid adjusted and levy limits modified.

HF2021-Falk (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax credit provided for certain residential solar energy system installations.

HF2022-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Registered housing included with services establishments in definition of health care facility for registration of predatory offenders.

HF2023-Newton (DFL)**Civil Justice**

Medical liability actions regulated; inadmissibility of certain health care provider statements, gestures and conduct provided.

HF2024-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Hibbing; Public Utilities Commission well grant funding provided.

HF2025-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Hibbing; street and storm sewer reconstruction grant funding provided.

HF2026-Solberg (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Conditional partial pardon of a person's criminal conviction provided upon successful completion of the challenge incarceration program.

HF2027-Johnson (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Probation officers and pretrial release agents authorized to conduct searches of persons on probation or pretrial release.

HF2028-Slawik (DFL)**Early Childhood Finance & Policy Division**

Departments of Human Services, Health and Education required to establish an inventory of early childhood services.

HF2029-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Consumer small loan lenders and residential mortgage originators and servicers regulated, calculation of reserves and non-forfeiture values of preneed funeral insurance contracts provided and additional commerce provisions provided.

HF2030-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County library system maintenance of effort requirement modified.

HF2031-Hornstein (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Jennie-O Turkey Store and subsidiaries product purchases prohibited for state agencies and departments.

HF2032-Westrom (R)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Governor and commissioner of corrections required to extradite foreign inmates back to their own countries.

HF2033-Faust (DFL)**Finance**

Research-based professional development funding provided for the St. Croix River Education District and "response to intervention" problem solving included.

HF2034-Brown (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Electronic pull-tab game rules adoption authorized.

HF2035-Swails (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Gifted and talented students' programs clarified.

HF2036-Gottwalt (R)**Health Care & Human Services****Policy & Oversight**

Commissioner of health required to convene an Alzheimer's disease working group and report required.

HF2037-Solberg (DFL)**Finance**

General Fund dedicated revenue appropriations transferred to other funds.

HF2038-Solberg (DFL)**Finance**

Office of Strategic and Long-range Planning established, additional revenue priorities in General Fund forecasts modified and report required.

HF2039-Jackson (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Twenty percent of minnows imported for aquatic farms authorized to be sold as bait.

HF2040-Urdahl (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Shared work plan provided.

HF2041-Sterner (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Probation violation provided for impaired driving offenders driving with any presence of alcohol during the period of probation.

HF2042-Sterner (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Financial counseling services availability required for recently discharged veterans.

HF2043-Sterner (DFL)**Finance**

Gold Star Family license plates created for family members of military personnel who have died in active military service; plate fee and registration tax exemptions provided for certain survivors.

HF2044-Sterner (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Mental health counseling services availability required for recently deployed service members.

HF2045-Winkler (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Specialized emergency response teams provided to supplement resources responding to catastrophe.

HF2046-Laine (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Smoking shisha tobacco products permitted in limited places.

HF2047-Drazkowski (R)**Finance**

Minneola Township; water quality and flood control structures grant funding provided.

HF2048-Thao (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Broker required to coordinate and manage oral language health care interpreter services and payment rates set for interpreter services.

HF2049-Wagenius (DFL)**Finance**

Environment and natural resources funding provided.

HF2050-Rukavina (DFL)
Finance
Eveleth; water and sewer infrastructure improvement funding provided.

HF2051-Newton (DFL)
Finance
Integration revenue provisions modified.

HF2052-Simon (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Home rule charter procedures established for jurisdictions that adopt ranked-choice voting.

HF2053-McFarlane (R)
Finance
Regional library basic system support grants modified.

HF2054-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County; land acquisition funding provided.

HF2055-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Ramsey County; land acquisition funding provided.

HF2056-Mullery (DFL)
Taxes
Refundable credit provided for victims of sexual assault.

HF2057-Beard (R)
Finance
Science and technology initiative promoted, commission created, center established, economic development grant programs created, terms defined and reports required.

HF2058-Sterner (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Automatic external defibrillators required in certain structures.

HF2059-Sterner (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Unpaid leave of absence from employment provided for an immediate family member of a person ordered into active military service during a time of war or other national emergency.

HF2060-Sterner (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Public adjusters regulated, notice of cancellation and prohibited practices modified, and insurance claims regulated for residential roofing goods and services.

HF2061-Hilstrom (DFL)
Finance
Brooklyn Center; ISD 286; community schools grant authorized.

HF2062-Lanning (R)
Commerce & Labor
Ladder Out of Poverty Task Force established, membership and duties provided and legislative appointments provided.

HF2063-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Commissioner of public safety required to present performance measures to the Legislature.

HF2064-Hilstrom (DFL)
Taxes
Minnesota Congressional delegation memorialized to sponsor and support the Main Street Fairness Act.

HF2065-Hilstrom (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Commissioner of corrections required to present performance measures to the Legislature.

HF2066-Mack (R)
Finance
Minnesota Zoo water quality funding provided.

HF2067-Mullery (DFL)
Taxes
Employers who employ qualified ex-felons allowed a credit.

HF2068-Kohls (R)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Game abandoned at game processing facilities added to the definition of wanton waste.

HF2069-Liebling (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Chemical health pilot projects created.

HF2070-Mullery (DFL)
Finance
Targeted neighborhood revitalization program modified and revolving fund created.

HF2071-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Summer programming provided for American Indian youth.

HF2072-Greiling (DFL)
Finance
Education finance reference updated.

HF2073-Greiling (DFL)
Finance
Education finance obsolete reference removed.

HF2074-Clark (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Counties and cities authorized to establish a main street and neighborhood revitalization program.

HF2075-Hosch (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Local foods commission created.

HF2076-Loeffler (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Equal access and equitable funding health and human services reform created; steering committee created.

Tuesday, March 24

HF2077-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Cities provided mechanisms to respond to state aid reductions and other revenue shortfalls, revenue flexibility increased, cities authorized to establish street improvement districts and to apportion improvement fees, plans required and cities authorized to issue emergency debt certificates for unexpected revenue shortfalls.

HF2078-Kalin (DFL)
Taxes
Chisago City; Lindstrom; joint venture established, debt issued for use outside of the jurisdiction and shared revenues authorized.

HF2079-Rukavina (DFL)
Taxes
Progressive surtax imposed on individuals, estates and trusts.

HF2080-Carlson (DFL)
Finance
Higher education institutions required to partner with high schools to promote college attendance, Minnesota promise for higher education established and the achieves scholarship program revised.

HF2081-Bigham (DFL)
Civil Justice
Foreclosure proceedings governing use provisions modified to enforce homeowner association assessment liens.

HF2082-Hortman (DFL)
Civil Justice
Uniform Disclaimer of Property Interests Act enacted.

HF2083-Persell (DFL)
Finance
Bemidji; Headwaters Science Center funding provided.

HF2084-Eken (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
State environment and natural resource agencies and departments reorganized, consolidated and restructured; new committees and boards established to advise Legislature and governor; and certain powers and

duties of related boards and agencies abolished.

HF2085-Koenen (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Counties authorized to make joint purchases of energy and energy generation projects, and a tax levy authorized.

HF2086-Slocum (DFL)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Chicago and St. Paul passenger rail line duties and powers prescribed of transportation commissioner, and design-build method of contracting in high-speed rail project authorized.

HF2087-Nornes (R)
Finance
Higher education funding provided, terms defined, appeals process provided, report required and awards provided for online courses.

HF2088-Slawik (DFL)
Finance
Early childhood education funding provided relating to school readiness programs, school readiness service agreements and prekindergarten exploratory projects; reports required.

HF2089-Hilty (DFL)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Office of Energy Security transferred to the Pollution Control Agency and renamed Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, report required, technical and housekeeping changes made and various responsibilities transferred.

HF2090-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
Low-carbon fuel standard for motor vehicle fuels study and recommendations required.

HF2091-Downey (R)
Commerce & Labor
Collective bargaining provision application limited to certain minors.

HF2092-Eken (DFL)
Finance
Red River basin management and water quality improvement funding provided.

HF2093-Downey (R)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota State Government Continuity Planning Commission created and report required.

HF2094-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota business venture capital program created and revolving fund created.

HF2095-Kalin (DFL)**Finance**

Green industrial parks funding provided.

HF2096-Kalin (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Green Enterprise Authority created.

HF2097-Kahn (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Chief environmental officer position established and report required.

HF2098-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Veteran home ombudsman position created.

HF2099-Zellers (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Commerce licensing and regulation provided; pre-license and continuing education requirements established.

HF2100-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Commissioner of agriculture required to report to the Legislature on the use of federal money allocated for state biomass-related activities.

HF2101-Murdock (R)**Finance**

Deer Creek; wastewater treatment facility improvements funding provided.

HF2102-Murdock (R)**Finance**

Deer Creek; community center improvements funding provided.

HF2103-Murdock (R)**Finance**

Henning; utility and street improvements funding provided.

HF2104-Eken (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Critical access nursing facilities designated.

HF2105-Bly (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Commissioner of education required to develop an assessment tool to fairly evaluate performance of alternative schools.

HF2106-Bly (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Alternative learning centers and charter schools five-year pilot program established to identify systemic improvement measures to best serve eligible students.

HF2107-Bly (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Schools authorized to use an interdisciplinary teaching and learning program model; interdisciplinary teaching license provided.

HF2108-Morgan (DFL)**Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division**

Burnsville; design-build method of contracting required for interchange construction.

HF2109-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

Burnsville; Trunk Highway 13 interchange reconstruction funding provided.

HF2110-Marquart (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Invasive species management provisions modified.

HF2111-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Neighborhood solar electricity demonstration project funding provided.

HF2112-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Congress of the United States memorialized to oppose enactment of legislation of the substance and tenor of the National Insurance Act of 2007.

HF2113-Hansen (DFL)**Taxes**

Property valuation reduction provided for land constituting a riparian buffer.

HF2114-Clark (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Minneapolis; special liquor license authorized.

HF2115-Simon (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Film and TV Board funding provided.

HF2116-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

Vehicle transaction fees increased, acceptable methods of payment provided and surcharge imposed.

HF2117-Sterner (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Waste management reporting requirements modified.

HF2118-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

National Guard post-deployment health assessments funding provided.

HF2119-Johnson (DFL)**Civil Justice**

Appellate court appointments included in the Commission on Judicial Selection process.

HF2120-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Corporate franchise taxation throw-back sales rule provided.

HF2121-Hackbarth (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Barbering and cosmetology boards separated, penalties imposed.

Wednesday, March 25

HF2122-Olin (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Kittson; Marshall; Roseau; County board elk management plan required.

HF2123-Wagenius (DFL)**Finance**

Waters required to be monitored for endocrine disruptors and other compounds.

HF2124-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Early Childhood Finance & Policy Division**

Child care center licensing requirements modified.

HF2125-Clark (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Chemical dependency aggressive initiative provided, alcoholic beverage tax increased to fund the initiative, obsolete language eliminated and technical corrections made.

HF2126-Loon (R)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Minnesota residents permitted to buy health coverage approved in other states, Physician's Council on Health Care Policy created to analyze health coverage mandates and tax credit provided for persons without access to employer-based coverage.

HF2127-Loon (R)**Taxes**

Research tax credit modified.

HF2128-Eken (DFL)**Finance**

Clean water fund legacy activities funding provided.

HF2129-Bly (DFL)**Taxes**

State general levy reduced for historic commercial buildings.

HF2130-Juhnke (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

On-sale event license requirement clarified.

HF2131-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

Environment and natural resources funding provided.

HF2132-Gunther (R)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council administration modified.

HF2133-Eken (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Storm water discharges regulation modified.

HF2134-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

Asset preservation for various state agencies and higher education facilities funding provided.

HF2135-Juhnke (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Horse operation recommendations made by commissioner of agriculture.

HF2136-Hamilton (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Microdistilleries authorized.

HF2137-Morrow (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Disabled veteran organizations exempted from the prohibition on use of an automatic dialing device in certain situations.

HF2138-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Insurance continuation coverage regulated, Minnesota law conformed to the requirements necessary for assistance eligible individuals who are not enrolled in continuation coverage to receive a federal premium subsidy under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

HF2139-Abeler (R)**Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division**

Ramsey; Trunk Highway 47 striping required from the intersection with Bunker Lake Boulevard NW to the intersection with Alpine Drive.

HF2140-Hayden (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Restorative justice-based alternative disposition process provided for certain juvenile offenses.

HF2141-Slocum (DFL)**Finance**

Women's business development program grant provided.

HF2142-Dettmer (R)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Forest Lake; church information display service sign installation required.

HF2143-Westrom (R)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Sex offenders required to wear tracking and monitoring bracelets after release from prison and penalties prescribed.

HF2144-Olin (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Roseau County; consolidated conservation lands authorized.

HF2145-Thissen (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
State-County Results, Accountability and Service Delivery Redesign established and reports required.

HF2146-Pelowski (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Minnesota Management and Budget oversight clarified and management analysis revolving fund established.

HF2147-Solberg (DFL)
Taxes
Grand Rapids; local sales tax imposition authorized and local government aid payment to the city adjusted.

HF2148-Huntley (DFL)
Finance
Medicare costs modified for purposes of nursing facility rebasing.

HF2149-Obermueller (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Medical licensing examination number of attempts to pass removed.

HF2150-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Health and human services agency funding provided.

HF2151-Brod (R)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Health care statewide system redesign plan developed.

HF2152-Peppin (R)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Hennepin County; Three Rivers Park District town board consent required before acquisition of property.

HF2153-Falk (DFL)
Finance
Lac qui Parle Valley; ISD 2853 allowed to levy funds for a replacement elevator.

HF2154-Sailer (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Composting competitive grant program established.

HF2155-Gunther (R)
Finance
Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment activity continuation funding provided.

HF2156-Anderson, P. (R)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Local election postponement or extension of voting hours provided in the event of inclement weather.

HF2157-Atkins (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Joint Underwriting Association required to provide liquor liability insurance on the same basis as other insurance.

HF2158-Westrom (R)
Finance
Postsecondary enrollment option program modified.

HF2159-Westrom (R)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Utility rebates provided to homeowners for certain renewable energy projects used to heat a residence.

HF2160-Westrom (R)
Energy Finance & Policy Division
Utility permitted to expend funds on renewable sources of electricity and receive credit to its conservation goals under certain conditions.

HF2161-Westrom (R)
Finance
Renewable energy projects grant established.

HF2162-Solberg (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Itasca County; tax-forfeited land lease terms modified.

HF2163-Loeffler (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Small employer health insurance market expanded and small employer health coverage standard application form development process created.

HF2164-Sterner (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Non-campaign disbursement costs and fees specified.

HF2165-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Ojibwe and Dakota immersion program funding provided.

HF2166-Lillie (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Barber and barbering school regulation modified.

HF2167-Murphy, E. (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Absentee ballot processing procedures modified and rejected absentee ballot review required by the county canvassing board.

HF2168-Persell (DFL)
Finance
Leech Lake Tribal College funding provided.

HF2169-Drazkowski (R)
Finance
Lewiston; ISD 857 allowed to collect special education revenue for hired special education teachers.

HF2170-Beard (R)
Finance
Science and technology initiative promoted, commission created, center established, economic development grant programs created, terms defined and reports required.

HF2171-Abeler (R)
Higher Education & Workforce Development Finance & Policy Division
Board of Trustees of MnSCU required to implement a policy on credit transfers and legislative report required.

HF2172-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
Sales tax technical changes made.

Thursday, March 26

HF2173-Smith (R)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Water conservation rate structure requirement modified.

HF2174-Hackbarth (R)
Finance
Prorated registration tax credit established for vehicles scrapped or declared a total loss.

HF2175-Hortman (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Metro Transit diesel bus idling reduction technology grant program established.

HF2176-Obermueller (DFL)
Civil Justice
Nuisance property disclosure to potential buyers required.

HF2177-Ward (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota literacy collaborative program established.

HF2178-Peterson (DFL)
Finance
Quality rating and improvement system funding and education finance provisions provided.

HF2179-Jackson (DFL)
Taxes
Mille Lacs County; sales tax exemption provided for construction materials and equipment used to construct courts facility.

HF2180-Doty (DFL)
Taxes
Property tax exemption provided for certain nursing homes.

HF2181-Hausman (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Film and TV Board film production investment grants authorized and reports required.

HF2182-Gardner (DFL)
Finance
Rating criteria required for capital project funding requests.

HF2183-Swails (DFL)
Finance
South Washington County; ISD 833 Center for the Arts grant funding provided.

HF2184-Swails (DFL)
Finance
South Washington County; ISD 833 Center for the Arts grant funding provided.

HF2185-Wagenius (DFL)
Finance
Pollution Control Agency required to recover costs for permits and certifications, and project proposer required to pay for costs of preparing environmental assessment worksheet.

HF2186-Nelson (DFL)
Taxes
Tax increment use authorized to offset state aid reductions.

HF2187-Peppin (R)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Offenses permitted to be charged in either the county of the offense or the home county of the arresting law enforcement agency.

HF2188-Anzelc (DFL)
Finance
Charter school transportation obligations transferred from school districts to charter schools.

HF2189-Nornes (R)
Finance
Textbook information amended, terms defined, resident status appeal allowed, additional award grant provided for online courses and report required.

HF2190-Hackbarth (R)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Vehicle towing required under certain conditions.

HF2191-Davnie (DFL)
Taxes
Tobacco provisions modified relating to moist snuff.

HF2192-Sterner (DFL)
Finance
Minnesota Irish Cultural Center funding provided.

HF2193-Shimanski (R)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
Minnesota processed foods labeling report required.

HF2194-Murphy, E. (DFL)
Taxes
Minnesota Colorectal Cancer Prevention and women's heart health program established, tobacco-related taxes increased and funds designated for public health programs.

HF2195-Clark (DFL)
Finance
Lead reduction grantee requirements modified.

HF2196-Sertich (DFL)
Finance
State appropriation bonds authorized.

HF2197-McNamara (R)
Finance
Lake St. Croix comprehensive water monitoring and phosphorus reduction funding provided.

HF2198-Mack (R)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Supplemental nutrition assistance program waiver application required.

HF2199-Ward (DFL)
Finance
Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and Cuyuna Lakes State Trail funding provided.

HF2200-Juhnke (DFL)
Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs
County Veterans Services Working Group extended.

HF2201-McFarlane (R)
Finance
Solar-generated energy power equipment funding provided.

HF2202-Bly (DFL)
Finance
Early childhood education funding provided for after-school community learning programs.

Property taxes continued from page 15

past. Lenczewski said this bill is like one that allowed Hennepin County to raise its sales tax for construction of a Minnesota Twins' ballpark.

"This is more conservative because we give the option of a reverse referendum," Marquart said.

"I agree that we need a diversified revenue stream," said Joe Mathews, general government policy analyst with the Association of Minnesota Counties. "There are concerns that a reverse referendum would result in a loss of county program aid with nothing to replace it."

Marquart said 26 other states allow this authority for counties and 20 states have a

higher sales tax than Minnesota.

Still, some members aren't so sure about the idea.

"You and I have both opposed local option sales tax and you come forward with this. We've been talking about our regressive tax system and sales tax is a regressive tax," said Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), the Republican lead on the House Property and Local Sales Tax Division.


He added that one aspect of the current local option sales tax is that receipts are used to fund projects of regional significance.

Marquart said the money from the half-cent sales tax could be used for that, if the county so chooses.

"Increasing the sales tax, in my view is no option at all," Lanning said.

He said the majority of state voters already approved a three-eighths of 1 percent sales tax increase for the arts and the outdoors, which takes effect this summer. "This half-cent would be on top of that."

Marquart said the big concern was the great inequities local option sales taxes cause. "If everyone has them, this minimizes the inequities."

Keith Carlson, executive director of the Metropolitan Inter-County Association, said this is a "been there and done that" scenario. He said a trust fund was opened in the 1980s and a sales tax was put into it for counties to use. Two years later, "the rug was pulled and the trust fund was eliminated. There's a lot of concern that we're going to find ourselves in the same place again." 

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MINNESOTA INDEX

'Want to get away?'

Billions spent by travelers in Minnesota between June 2007 and May 2008.....	\$12.12
Full-time jobs supported by that money.....	271,500
Billions in wages, salaries and proprietary income earned by those workers.....	\$6.74
Billions in state government revenues generated by those travelers.....	\$1.53
Millions in local government revenue generated by those travelers.....	\$497
Estimated percent of state sales taxes that comes from the leisure and hospitality industry..	15
Percent of the state's private sector employment provided by the industry	10.7
Estimated percent of total hotel/motel room-nights sold to meeting/convention travelers	20
Approximate number of bed and breakfast operations that have opened in Minnesota in the last 20 years.....	200
Approximate combined total of Minnesota hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts....	1,043
Estimated number of rooms available.....	62,833
Approximate number of resorts in Minnesota	890
Estimated number of units available	11,484
Approximate number of campgrounds on public and private lands in the state	670
Estimated number of campsites available	30,025
Occupancy rates between June 2007 and May 2008 for hotels/motels, resorts and campgrounds, as percent.....	64, 51, 35
Percent of guests between June 2007 and May 2008 at hotels/motels, resorts and campgrounds, who were Minnesota residents.....	51, 69, 76
Average daily rate between June 2007 and May 2008 for hotels/motels/bed and breakfasts	\$101.90
Rate for resorts, campgrounds.....	\$147.97, \$23.99
Ranking of Red Wing on the 2008 National Geographic Traveler magazine's Top Historic Destinations in the World	23
Height, in feet, of the legendary lumberjack Paul Bunyan near Brainerd.....	26
Floor of the open-air observation deck at the Foshay Tower in Minneapolis	31
Miles of shoreline in Voyageurs National Park.....	655
Islands in the park	500
Approximate number of lakes combined in the Chippewa and Superior national forests.....	3,000
Miles of the Mississippi River in Minnesota	680
Miles of the Great River Road in Minnesota	575

— M. Cook

Sources: Minnesota Vacation Home Rental Task Force Report and Recommendations; Explore Minnesota Tourism, January 2009; other Explore Minnesota Tourism publications, including Minnesota Explorer, Spring/Summer 2009; The Economic Impact of Expenditures By Travelers On Minnesota June 2007 – May 2008, Davidson-Peterson Associates.

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