

SESSION WEEKLY



PEOPLE ARE ON THE MOVE

DRAWING THE LINES TO REFLECT MIGRATION

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: VOTERS, YOU DECIDE

HF1617 - HF1670

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
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Flashback to 1991, 2001



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Session Weekly May 3, 1991: At a joint meeting of the House and Senate Economic Development Education and Housing committees, Hillary Clinton discussed Skills of the American Workforce study by the National Center of Education and the Economy. She said that because U.S. children go to school fewer days, they graduate from high school with the equivalent of two fewer years of education than their European and Asian counterparts.

No more mercury thermometers

The sale or free distribution of mercury thermometers manufactured after June 1, 2001, were banned beginning in 2002 following Gov. Jesse Ventura's signature of a new law. The measure was sponsored by Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea). According to experts, the amount of mercury in a household medical thermometer, about 0.75 to 1 gram, is enough to prompt officials to call a fish advisory on a lake.

Session Weekly May 4, 2001

Northwest bonding proposal takes off

A \$350 million bonding proposal to finance a proposed airbus maintenance facility for Northwest Airlines in Duluth and Hibbing received initial approval May 2 from two House policy committees. HF1655, sponsored by Rep. Wayne Simoneau (DFL-Fridley), would provide \$250 million in bonding for the Duluth facility and an additional \$100 million for a jet engine repair plant in Hibbing.

Session Weekly May 3, 1991

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SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Rep. Sondra Erickson, chairwoman of the House Education Reform Committee, carries a giant display pencil into the hearing room prior to the committee hearing to mark-up the omnibus education policy bill April 28. Passed by three committees, the bill awaits action by the full House.

— Photo by Tom Olmscheid

Where the people are

Population growth varies across state but has big redistricting impact

By BRENDA VAN DYCK

It should come as no surprise to anyone who's witnessed the spread of new housing developments in the outlying Twin Cities metropolitan area that these places are among the fastest growing in the state. Some areas even lead the nation in their growth. This data came out of the 2010 Census, which legislators are now using to draw new legislative and congressional district boundaries.

While the state of Minnesota has grown in population by 7.8 percent in the last decade to reach 5,303,925, this growth was not evenly distributed across the state. According

to State Demographer Tom Gillaspy, the most rapidly growing areas are the communities surrounding the Twin Cities, while the areas with declining population

are in the northwestern, northeastern and southwestern areas of the state.

In addressing the House Redistricting Committee earlier this session, Gillaspy said that the average House district has increased by 2,869 people in the last decade. But there are wide swings in levels of growth for different districts. Some districts have grown rapidly, while others have declined. At an extreme, there is an 86 percent difference in size between the largest and smallest districts in the state.

Overall population growth in the state is a little lower than the national average of 9.7 percent, but some counties in Minnesota were among the fastest growing in the

First Reading continued on page 4

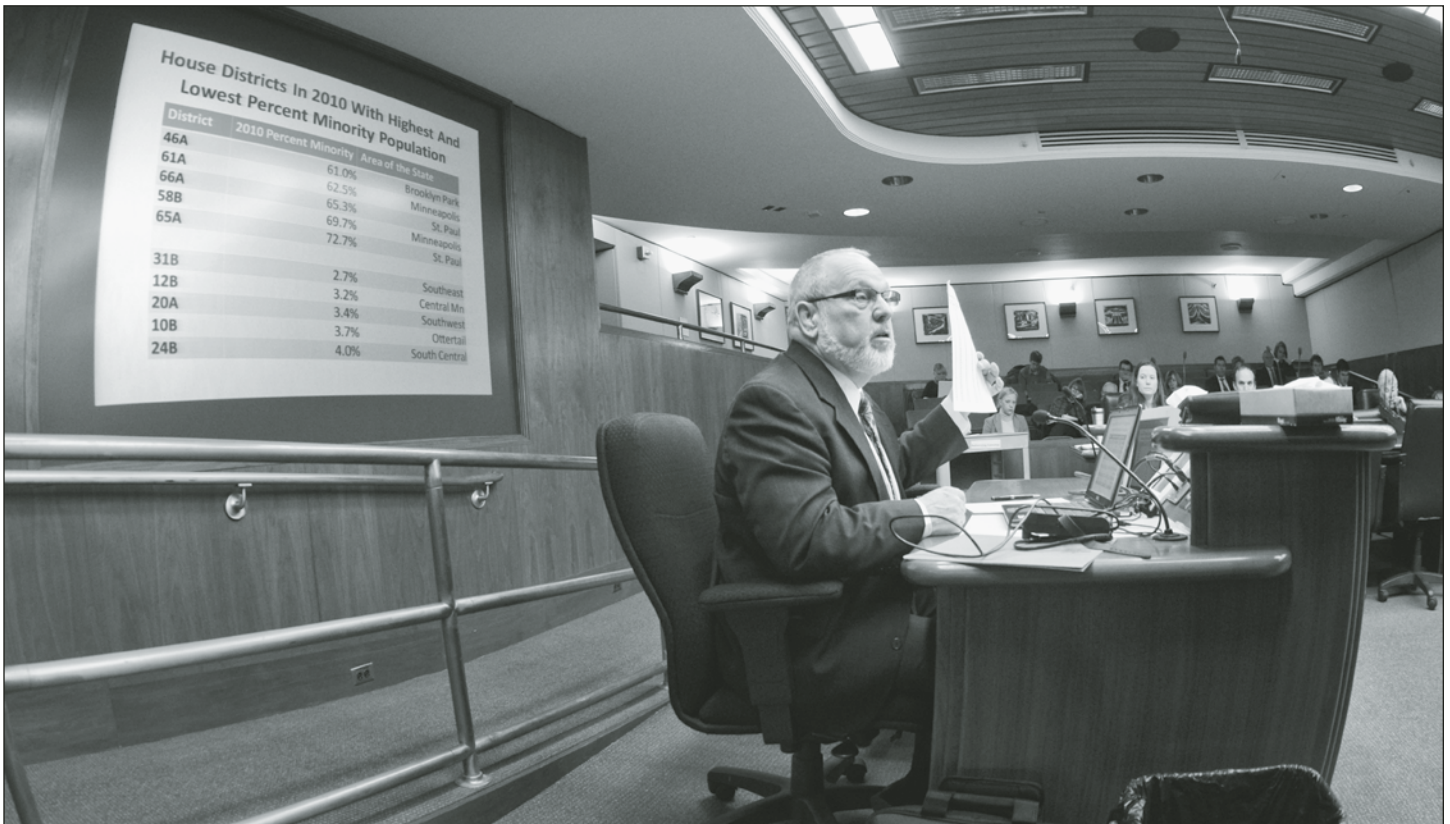


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

State Demographer Tom Gillaspy answers a question about House districts with the highest and lowest minority populations during a March 29 meeting of the House Redistricting Committee.

country. These include Scott, Carver, Isanti, Wright, Sherburne and Chisago counties. For example, the highest overall population growth was in Scott County, which grew 45 percent over the last decade. Gillaspay said this reflects people’s desires to live in rural areas, but also to be close to the amenities of larger metropolitan areas.

Ideal district population

Based on the census numbers, the ideal population for a House district in 2010 is 39,582; for a Senate district it’s 79,163.

The most populous House district is 35A, which is in Scott County and represented by Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee). It has a population of 59,872, which is 51.3 percent over the ideal population. When this district was created in 2002, it had a population of 36,485 — 0.62 percent below the ideal population at that time.

Swift County in western Minnesota had the largest population decline of 18 percent. It also houses part of the district with the smallest population; that district is 20A, with a population of 32,187, which is 18.7 percent below the ideal population. District 20A borders South Dakota and is part of Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Swift and Yellow Medicine counties. It is represented by Rep. Andrew Falk (DFL-Murdock). When this district was created in the last round of redistricting, it paired two incumbents against each other. (Both members retired from the Legislature that year, and the seat was won by DFLer Aaron Peterson.)

Gillaspay said that the population increases and decreases have followed the same patterns for many years. Rural areas that experienced economic declines in the 1980s continued to decline, while suburban areas continued to grow. Many of those rural counties that have experienced long-term population decline are also places where the

Current Largest and Smallest House Districts

Largest

District	Population	% Above Ideal Population	Member
35A	59,872	51.3%	Mike Beard (R)
19B	59,068	49.2%	Joe McDonald (R)
32A	55,517	40.3%	Joyce Peppin (R)
16B	52,029	31.4%	Mary Kiffmeyer (R)
36B	50,199	26.8%	Pat Garofalo (R)

Smallest

District	Population	% Below Ideal Population	Member
20A	32,187	-18.7%	Andrew Falk (D)
58A	32,902	-16.9%	Joe Mullery (D)
65A	33,938	-14.3%	Rena Moran (D)
41B	34,054	-14.0%	Pat Mazorol (R)
20B	34,629	-12.5%	Lyle Koenen (D)

average age is older than the rest of the state. Gillaspay said there is not a lot of potential for turnaround in these counties.

The central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul also lost population. With the exception of District 59B, which is in northeast Minneapolis, all of the House districts in St. Paul and Minneapolis are between 2 percent and 18 percent below the ideal population.

Gillaspay said the differences in population among legislative districts now are greater than they were in 2000, but not as large as those in 1990. There is a range of about 25,000 people between the largest and smallest House districts.

Redistricting tries to equalize these differences in population changes, and invariably, redrawn boundaries sometimes put two existing members in the same district and create new districts with open seats. After district maps had been redrawn by court order in 2002, the plan resulted in 34 incumbents paired against each other and 17 open seats. There were seven districts with Democrats versus Republicans, five

with Democrats versus Democrats, and five with Republicans versus Republicans. Often incumbents of the same party won’t run against each other; they’ll retire or move to a newly created bordering district.

New Congressional boundaries

The Legislature will also redraw the boundaries of U.S. congressional districts. Before the census data came out, there were concerns that the state would lose a U.S. congressional seat. That did not occur. But there are major differences in population. Districts 2 and 8 have substantially higher population than other districts. The ideal population for congressional districts is 662,991. The 2nd District has a population of 74,000 over the ideal, and the 8th district has population of 94,300 over the ideal.

Four of the eight congressional districts have populations under the ideal. The 7th district experienced the largest decline in population; it is 46,900 under the ideal.

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Frequently called numbers
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Chief Clerk of the House
296-2314

House Index
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296-2344
Voice mail/order bills..... 296-2343

Senate Index
296-2887
Governor’s Office
201-3400

HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL 28 - MAY 5, 2011

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select information heard in House committees and other House activities held April 29-May 5. 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 bill awaits floor action

An omnibus policy bill, approved May 4 by the House Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Finance Committee, would change how public grain storage facilities calculate their bonding requirements.

Sponsored by Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake), HF1611 also makes technical changes to agricultural laws. It

now moves to the House floor. A companion, SF1324, sponsored by Sen. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton), awaits action by the full Senate.

Public grain storage warehouses currently bond based on 50 percent of the net liability of monthly peak dollar value of grain stored. This method requires monthly reports by grain elevators, and there is a lag between monthly bonding and incremental grain value totals. Under proposed changes, elevators would only need to report once a year. The annual average of storage liability would be used to calculate the amount of bonding necessary. This could reduce the bonding amounts and prevent over-bonding, according to Department of Agriculture officials.

One of the technical changes would encourage more counties to collect wasted or leftover pesticides on behalf of the state collection program. About 60 counties have a cooperative agreement to collect pesticides,

but another 17 counties are concerned about the recordkeeping requirements in the indemnification contract, according to Greg Buzicky, director of the department's Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division. The bill would allow for electronic data collection and would pay counties 10 cents for every pound of pesticide they report, in addition to the 25 cents per pound they already receive for waste pesticide collection.

Dealers who don't sell pesticides as their main function would be able to request an exemption from reporting requirements.

Another technical change would add utility companies to the registry of tree-care providers. Many utilities have in-house nursery staff. The department maintains a list in order to notify tree-care professionals about urgent matters, such as the discovery of invasive species.

The Agriculture Department also certifies

FIRST LOOK



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Tim Kinley of Maplewood, from left, Bob Murray of Roseville and Curtis Neff of St. Paul take a look at the proposed legislative district maps prior to a hearing of the House Redistricting Committee May 3.

how seeds and plants are treated before they can be exported. Each country has its own plant import regulations and sometimes the certification fee does not cover the cost of the department's work. Rather than a set fee, the bill would enable the department to charge a fee necessary to recover its costs. The program is self-supporting and does not receive General Fund dollars.

Other changes proposed include redefining "pasture" to include crop fields where livestock graze following fall harvest and giving the Board of Animal Health more flexibility in determining quarantine boundaries when diseased animals are discovered.

Language was inserted into the bill regarding who has authority to require pesticide permits on certain water bodies. The Pollution Control Agency seeks a broad definition that may include pools of water on land, while the agriculture industry prefers the narrower federal definition of water bodies that can be navigated. Hamilton, the committee chairman, said discussions are ongoing.

— S. HEGARTY

Budget

Accounting technical change

A technical change would affect how Minnesota Management & Budget maintains the state's various financial accounts.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim O'Driscoll (R-Sartell), HF1117 would allow the safety net provided by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to count against requirements to insure state funds.

State law currently requires that financial institutions where the state deposits its funds must insure the total amount with corporate surety bonds. The bill would make it so they only have to insure any amount beyond what is already insured by the FDIC.

O'Driscoll said local governments already have the ability. MMB supports the change.

Passed 130-0 by the House May 2, it now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Ted Lillie (R-Lake Elmo) is the sponsor.

— N. BUSSE

Business & Commerce

Filling the insurance gap

Minnesotans who lose their jobs could have an alternative to costly health insurance

coverage through the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).

The House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee approved HF1397 April 29, sponsored by Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen (R-Glencoe), and moved it to the House floor. Sen. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd) sponsors a companion, SF1158, which awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

Under COBRA, a terminated employee enrolled in the employer's health plan may continue that coverage by paying the full premium costs. The bill would create an individual health insurance policy, called a GAP policy, for "Guaranteed, Affordable, Portable," which is intended as a temporary alternative for people between jobs.

"Taking on a new payment as large or larger than their mortgage payment is quite difficult when (workers) become unemployed. For example, state employees covered under the health insurance plans face an annual COBRA premium cost in excess of \$16,000 annually if you lose your job," Gruenhagen said. That amount would be for family coverage.

The bill would require employers' health carriers to offer three GAP options with various deductible amounts, besides the standard COBRA option.

"Having been in health insurance as long as I have, these last years when the premiums have gotten to where they are, I have literally had people crying in my office when they look at their COBRA premium, especially in that 50 to 64 age bracket," Gruenhagen said.

Because the proposal is still in the idea stage, there isn't a basis for determining what the premiums would be, which is one reason Robert Commodore, the Commerce Department's senior director of consumer and industry services, expressed concern about the bill.

"The concern we have right now is the cost of these GAP policies is unknown. We're not sure how they're going to be rated," he said.

— K. BERGGREN

'No' to health exchange planning

A bill that would update and clarify language regarding insurance statutes came close to including a provision that would have helped the state potentially create a health insurance exchange as required by the federal health care reform law.

Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove

Heights) unsuccessfully proposed an amendment to HF1394 that would have created a working group to establish a state health insurance exchange.

House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee Chairman Joe Hoppe (R-Chaska) sponsors the bill. The committee voted 12-9 May 4 not to adopt the amendment, then approved the bill and sent it to the House floor. Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R-Lino Lakes) sponsors a companion, SF1045, which awaits action by the full Senate.

"I know that is a politically loaded issue at this point," Atkins said after introducing the amendment May 3. "This piece simply establishes a marketplace for competitive health care products that consumers can go shopping in and see apples-to-apples comparisons."

Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston) said "Obamacare" is an "abomination, but it's the law." He supported the amendment because he'd prefer to create a Minnesota exchange than submit to a federal one.

"I am not a supporter of the federal health care legislation," Hoppe said. "I think however, this is something, in my opinion, that we should do ourselves rather than have done to us." States will be evaluated in Jan. 2013 by the federal government to assess their exchange plans. If they're not deemed ready to roll out by Jan. 1, 2014, the state must participate in a federal exchange.

Rep. Diane Anderson (R-Eagan) said there is already funding through the state's Health and Human Services Department to design an exchange. Hoppe said the exchange is about insurance, which is the purview of the commerce committee.

Twila Brase, president of the Citizens Council for Health Care Reform, said lawmakers should wait for the results of states' efforts to overturn the federal law in court, and said there had not been enough notice for public testimony on the amendment.

Hoppe opted for caution, recommending not adopting the amendment but working on the measure separately.

— K. BERGGREN

Civil Law

Marriage amendment bill advances

Two House committees advanced a bill to put a constitutional amendment question on the November 2012 ballot to define marriage as "only a union of one man and one woman."

Sponsored by Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

University of St. Thomas law professor Teresa Collett, right, testifies before the House Civil Law Committee May 2 in support of a bill that would ask voters to amend the state constitution to recognize marriage as only a union between one man and one woman. Rep. Steve Gottwalt, left, sponsors the bill.

Cloud), HF1613 now awaits action by the full House. Sen. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd) sponsors a companion, SF1309, which awaits action by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

In testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee May 4 and the House Civil Law Committee May 2, Gottwalt said recent polls indicate that 70 percent of Minnesotans want to vote on the issue.

Indicative of the divisive nature of the bill were two rabbis who spoke on opposite sides of the issue. Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker, who officiated a same-sex marriage, said the definition of marriage should stay within the realm of religion and not the jurisdiction of the state. Allowing voters to decide could result in the state imposing its religious views on a minority.

Rabbi Moshe Feller said it is clear from Scripture that the purpose of becoming man and wife is found in Genesis where it says to

“be fruitful and multiply.”

A Catholic bishop, Lutheran pastor, civil rights activist and a Latino minister from a Spanish-language non-denominational church in Bloomington were among those who spoke in favor of the bill. In addition, University of St. Thomas law professor Teresa Collett said 30 other states define marriage as a union between one man and one woman and that half of the 10 states that allow same-sex privileges do so because of a judge's order.

Jennifer Roback Morse, president of the Ruth Institute, a project of the National Organization for Marriage, said recognizing same-sex marriages would be “nothing more than a government registry of friendships” and that mothers and fathers are not interchangeable.

Opponents said the bill would cause division between families, neighbors and co-workers and would not help anyone. Representatives of OutFront Minnesota and

Project 515 and the adult son of two dads spoke against the bill. Dr. Paul Melcher said the bill would have a detrimental effect on children of same-sex couples, who should be entitled to equal rights, benefits and protections as children of heterosexual couples. “Instead you should be focusing on improving the health care and education for all children,” he said.

— S. HEGARTY

Civil immunity extended for schools

Rep. Bob Dettmer (R-Forest Lake) believes adults and children, particularly those in rural communities, would be more likely to engage in physical activity if schools were more comfortable allowing outside groups to use their recreational amenities.

He sponsors HF1343 that would clarify a statute that provides civil immunity for school districts that make their facilities available for recreational use by the public.

The immunity would bar a person from holding the district liable for an injury or loss resulting from the use of the school facility for recreational activity.

The bill was held over May 3 by the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee for possible inclusion in an omnibus policy bill. Its companion, SF1068, sponsored by Sen. Ted Daley (R-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee.

The bill does not change current law regarding a school district's liability in allowing public use of its recreational spaces, Dettmer said, but offers comfort language to help clarify the civil immunity.

“This bill removes the barriers to schools to open their doors and their facilities to allow more recreational activities,” said Dettmer, a retired physical education teacher.

The state chapter of the American Heart Association and the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition approached Dettmer to sponsor the legislation. Research shows that people who have regular access to recreational facilities are more likely to exercise, said Rachel Callanan, vice president of advocacy for the Minnesota AHA chapter.

In many rural communities public schools are the only indoor facilities to engage in physical activity, Callanan said.

“Anything that removes hurdles for kids to be physically active is a good strategy,” Dettmer said.

— H. LONG

Consumers

Racino bill gets its first hearing

A plan to allow slot machines at the state's two horse-racing tracks and use part of the profits to fund jobs programs had its first hearing in a House committee May 5.

Sponsored by Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont), HF1480 is the so-called “racino” bill. As proposed, it would allow for the establishment of video slot machines at horse-racing facilities. A portion of the profits — \$135 million per biennium, according to Gunther — would be used for economic development projects.

The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee took testimony on the bill, but did not take any action. Gunther said the committee will vote on the bill at a future meeting. There is no Senate companion.

The bill would establish a “Minnesota

Future Fund” to pay for primarily jobs programs and assistance for high-tech businesses. Mark Lofthus, business development director for the Department of Employment and Economic Development, said Minnesota is falling behind other states in funding economic development.

“We are in a very strict competition for job creation in the United States and North America and around the world,” he said.

Horse breeder Jeff Hilger said the state’s equine industry is in danger of going under because Minnesota racetracks aren’t as profitable as those in states that have racinos. He said breeders prefer to compete in states that pay larger winnings.

“Every state that has race horse racing around us has a racino. The purses are higher,” he said.

Representatives from the state’s tribal casinos said the bill would take away their business, which would in turn cause job losses and damage rural economies.

Karen Diver, chairwoman of the Fond du Lac Band of Superior Chippewa, said the tribe’s two casinos constitute the second-largest employer in northeast Minnesota. Even a modest cut in payroll would be devastating to cities like Cloquet and Carlton, she said.

Marge Anderson, chief executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, said the casinos provided a path to prosperity to American Indians who once only knew poverty. She said they now live in fear that it will be taken away.

“Anytime our people have something of value, others want it,” she said.

— N. BUSSE

Education

Omnibus policy bill to House floor

A statewide literacy plan is the cornerstone of the House omnibus education policy bill, HF1381, sponsored by the House Education Reform Committee Chairwoman Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton).

The House Education Finance Committee approved the bill May 3, as did the House Ways and Means Committee May 4. It now goes to the House floor. Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista) sponsors a companion, SF1167, which awaits action by the full Senate.

The bill includes HF1487, sponsored by Rep. Pam Myhra (R-Burnsville), which would direct school districts to develop

literacy plans based on five key components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

The plans would end “social promotion” by requiring students to repeat third grade if they are not reading at grade level, with good cause exceptions allowed. Plans would provide supports for struggling readers starting in kindergarten and require ongoing parent communication about students’ reading proficiency starting in kindergarten. Parents whose child is to be retained because of lack of proficiency could request a meeting with teachers and administrators and would have the final say about the decision.

“When you talk about retaining students there’s a cost,” said Rep. Lyndon Carlson, Sr. (DFL-Crystal). He expressed concern not only about the fiscal cost but the consequences to students who may still struggle after retention.

Erickson said she is working on how to deal with such consequences “in a very sensitive way.”

“Our goal is to have no retentions because we’ve been able to figure out a system to ensure that these children are reading. But then again, there is always the ‘what if,’” Erickson said.

Other provisions would require teacher licensure candidates to pass, not just successfully complete, certain exams, including basic skills exams in reading, writing and math; exempt some Montessori, language immersion or Advanced Placement

teachers from district-wide seniority rules in the case of layoffs; and facilitate third-party billing for special education costs, helping districts recoup costs from Medicaid or insurance companies.

Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) successfully offered an amendment that would allow school districts that have experienced flooding in at least two of the previous five years to begin school before Labor Day.

— K. BERGGREN

Slow going on E-12 finance bill

The conference committee on HF934*/SF1030 inched toward adopting slivers of the big bill that would appropriate approximately \$14.16 billion for early childhood through high school education over the next two fiscal years. House Education Finance Committee Chairman Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington) and Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista) are the bill’s sponsors.

Senate conferees offered May 4 to accept House language in some provisions that were identical or nearly so. They include proposed changes to sparsity revenue for elementary and secondary schools and schools that will close; the Kittson school closing; repealing the Safe Schools levy maintenance of effort requirement; allowing parents to request trial placement at the Minnesota state academies for blind or deaf students; eliminating growth factors in the calculation of special education funding; and budget forecast numbers.

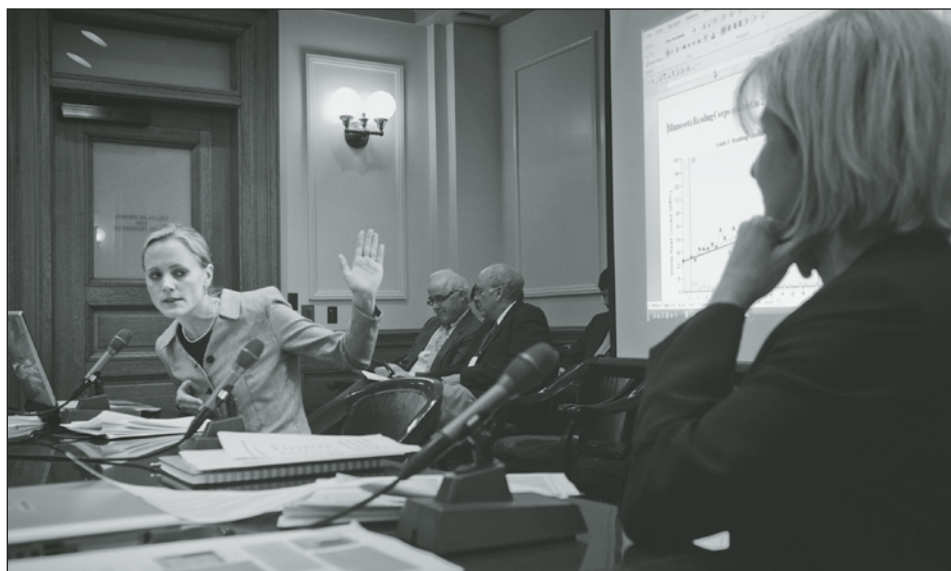


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

During a May 2 meeting of the omnibus education finance bill conference committee, Kathy Saltzman, right, executive director of Minnesota Education Corps, listens as Lorien Parson, Minnesota Reading Corps development and training coordinator, shows on a projected graph the progress a third grade boy made in his reading skills.

The Senate conferees prefer the language in their bill regarding the Northland Community School closing; early graduation scholarship proposal; and reallocation of revenue allocated to early graduates who don't participate in the scholarship program.

No action was taken.

Some key proposals in the House bill not included or significantly different from those in the Senate bill are: a new small schools revenue category, expansion of extended time revenue, a very specific teacher appraisal framework linked to hiring decisions and a voucher program for low-income students in low-performing schools to attend nonpublic schools.

Both bodies propose teacher tenure, collective bargaining and strike limits.

The committee also heard from testifiers including Jeri Powell, engagement specialist with Students First. Powell said research indicates that "last-in, first-out" employment policies are counterproductive for three reasons. She said they harm high-need districts mostly because that's where more new teachers work; they cause greater numbers of teachers to be laid off, since more newer teachers earning less are needed to reach a budget target; and that such policies target new graduates with high enthusiasm and current skills.

Members heard May 2 from a group informally known as "Moms on a Mission" who advocate for reading instruction for teachers and literacy specialists and tutors in schools. The Senate bill proposes \$85.2 million in literacy incentive aid. The category is not included in the House bill.

— K. BERGGREN

Charter school deadline extended

The 63 charter schools seeking new or re-approved authorizers could have additional time to do so.

The House passed HF134/SF55* 123-6 May 2. Sponsored by Rep. Kelby Woodard (R-Belle Plaine) and Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), it would extend to Sept. 7, 2011, the deadline for charter school authorizers to re-apply to the Education Department for approval to continue in that role.

Charter schools whose authorizers haven't re-applied or aren't re-approved would be allowed to continue operating with their current authorizer through June 30, 2012, but after that could only operate if they have entered into another charter school contract with an approved authorizer.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) successfully amended the bill to require a charter school that ceases operation after the transition period to notify the school district in which it is located, so the district could plan for a possible influx of students.

The bill also would give the education commissioner the ability to terminate an authorizer's ability to charter a school "for any good cause shown" that provides a legally sufficient reason to do so.

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have stricken a provision to indemnify the education commissioner or department staff for actions of charter school staff. He said the provision, coupled with the commissioner's expanded authority to terminate a contract, could give the commissioner too much power while limiting families' or individuals' right to redress.

"The authorizer is actually a group that stands between the commissioner and the charter school. Indemnification holds the commissioner harmless for the actions of the charter school staff, with whom they do not have a charter relationship. It is the authorizer that has the contract with the charter school," Woodard said.

Those allowed to authorize charter schools include a school board; certain sectarian institutions incorporated in Minnesota; colleges or universities; and certain nonprofit organizations. They must demonstrate they have the financial and governance capacity and educational mission suited to enter into charter agreements.

— K. BERGGREN

Elections

Election administration changes

Signed
by
the
governor

A package of noncontroversial election changes is now law.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim Sanders (R-Blaine) and Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R-Lino Lakes), the law modifies election administration laws to provide flexibility and cost savings to local governments. It is effective April 30, 2011.

The law permits municipalities to establish combined polling places for any number of precincts that exist within its borders and that share a common boundary line. It also makes changes to statute that will prevent cities from having to redistrict before the state finishes its own redistricting process.

Other provisions in the law include:

- requiring counties to count absentee and mail-in ballots at the same time and report them as one vote total;
- clarifying that only voters and election judges are allowed within 6 feet of voting booths, ballot counters or electronic voting equipment during voting hours;
- modifying the timeline for county residents to request a court to review a re-districting plan for county commissioner districts; and
- changing the timeline for filing county commissioner redistricting plans.

HF978*/SF919/CH18

— N. BUSSE

Voter ID amendment approved

Minnesotans may get to decide whether voters must show valid photo identification before casting their ballot.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer (R-Big Lake), HF1597 would propose an amendment to the state constitution that would require all voters to present a valid government-issue photo ID. If passed by the House and Senate, the measure would be put to the voters as a question on the 2012 general election ballot.

The House Government Operations and Elections Committee approved the bill April 29 on a 7-5 party-line vote and sent it to the House Ways and Means Committee. There is no Senate companion.

"This is a strong, strong will-of-the-people issue," Kiffmeyer said. "It is fair to take it to the people and let them have a direct say."

During more than three hours of debate, opponents argued that no hard evidence exists of voter identification fraud in the state. Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said the amendment would likely be ruled unconstitutional if challenged in court.

"You should want to know the facts before you start abridging somebody's fundamental right," Winkler said.

At least one Republican expressed concerns. Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee) said he supported a photo ID requirement, but noted that other states have passed laws — not constitutional amendments — for voter ID.

"Putting this to a constitutional question is not a given," Beard said.

The bill would ask voters in the 2012 general election to answer yes or no to the following question:

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to require that all voters



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie testifies before the House Government Operations and Elections Committee April 29 on a bill that proposes an amendment to the state constitution that would require voters to present photo identification prior to receiving a ballot.

present an approved form of photographic identification prior to voting; all voters be subject to identical eligibility verification standards regardless of the time of their registration; and the state provide at no charge an approved photographic identification to eligible voters?"

— N. BUSSE

House passes voter ID bill

A plan to require all voters to present a valid photo identification card at their polling place was passed 73-59 by the House May 5.

Sponsored by Rep. Mary Kiffmeyer (R-Big Lake) and Sen. Warren Limmer (R-Maple Grove), HF201/SF509* would require all voters to present a photo ID with their current address before receiving a ballot. It now returns to the Senate, where a different version passed 37-26 on April 28.

Under the provisions, voters without an ID could cast a provisional ballot that would be counted if they verify their identity to local authorities within seven days after an election. Also, voters without a current photo ID could apply for a free voter ID card; however, they must have appropriate documentation to prove their identity.

The bill would also provide for a system

of electronic polling place rosters to replace the current paper-based system; however, adoption of the new rosters would be optional to each local government.

During nearly four hours of debate, supporters argued the bill would enhance the integrity of the state's elections, while opponents argued it would disenfranchise some voters.

Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), whose birth certificate read "Baby Boy Urdahl," said he sympathizes with those who have trouble proving their identity to the government; however, he overcame his personal difficulties in that area and argued others would too.

"I think we have the resiliency to surmount whatever problems come up," he said.

Rep. Kerry Gauthier (DFL-Duluth) said the bill amounted to a "poll tax" that unfairly targets people who can't afford to obtain the documents they would need to get a photo ID. He added that the problem of voter impersonation has never been shown to exist in Minnesota.

"It's really about poll taxes, and it's really about voter suppression," he said of the bill.

— N. BUSSE

Employment

Criminal background checks

For ex-offenders, having to admit to their criminal past on a job application might be a roadblock to a second chance at life. A House committee approved a bill designed to remove that barrier and help them get their foot in the door with a prospective employer.

Sponsored by Rep. Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake), HF1448 would prohibit employers from asking about a job applicant's criminal record or history unless and until they have been selected for an interview.

The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee approved the bill April 28 and sent it to the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee.

The bill is a proposed expansion of a 2009 law that banned government employers from considering a job applicant's criminal background in the initial job application process. McFarlane said qualified job candidates are sometimes unfairly discriminated against because of past mistakes.

"Instead of being evaluated for potential employment based on their skill sets and

being given the opportunity to share their experience in an interview... employers first evaluate them based on a checkbox on an application form," she said.

Rep. Ernie Leidiger (R-Mayer) said the bill "strikes a very good balance" by giving applicants a fair chance in the application process, but still letting employers find out about their criminal past before a final hiring decision is made.

Kristin Fernholz, government relations director for the Minnesota Retailers Association, said the bill would "create a massive inefficiency" by making employers interview candidates they won't hire anyway once their criminal histories are known.

"Background checks are a critical and crucial tool to ensuring the safety of customers and employees," Fernholz said.

Rep. Kirk Stensrud (R-Eden Prairie), a small business owner, said he would not necessarily discriminate against a potential employee because of a criminal record, but that he wanted to know before the interview, not after.

"I want to know that up front, and I don't want to waste my valuable time as a business owner," he said.

Sen. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton) sponsors the companion, SF1122, which awaits action by the Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Env. & Natural Resources

Legacy funds would pay PILT

A proposal to set aside a portion of the Legacy funds to pay counties a payment in lieu of taxes has rerouted the Legacy funding bill to the House Taxes Committee before it can advance to the House floor.

Sponsored by Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), HF1061 was approved as amended May 3 by the House Legacy Funding Division and two days later by the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee.

The bill includes appropriations to all four Legacy funds: one year of funding for the Outdoor Heritage projects, and two years of appropriations for the Clean Water, Parks and Trails, and the Arts and Cultural Heritage.

As proposed, when new state land is acquired with the Legacy funds, a portion of the money would be transferred into a land management account to pay for ongoing maintenance associated with newly acquired land, including payment in lieu of taxes.

REAGAN'S ROOM



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Sen. Geoff Michel, center, glances over at 6-year-old Reagan Zellers, who sat at one side of the room while her father House Speaker Kurt Zellers, from left, Senate Majority Leader Amy Koch, House Majority Leader Matt Dean and Rep. Doug Wardlow, took part in the weekly Republican press conference April 29.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said using dedicated tax revenue to pay local government “property taxes” is not what the voters intended when they passed the 2008 constitutional amendment, which dedicates 0.375 percent of sales tax receipts to the four funds.

Two of the funds were particularly criticized.

The Parks and Trails Fund is primarily divided three ways between the Department of Natural Resources, the Metropolitan Council and a state grants program. Urdahl proposes changing the appropriations formula from a 43-43-14 percent split to a 40-40-20 percent split. The seven-county metropolitan area would receive a disproportionate amount, because the Twin Cities area generates the majority of the tax revenue and has a higher percentage of park users, Wagenius said.

The Arts and Cultural Heritage account would become mainly a competitive grants program for public broadcasters, zoos, libraries, language preservation educators and several other groups that have received set amounts in the past. The Minnesota Humanities Center, the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and the Department of Administration would serve as grantors.

“The essence is not to change what’s been done. It’s just a different way of doing it,” said Urdahl, noting the earmarks would go away and the responsibility for allocating the funds would change.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said there’s at least one earmark that remains in the bill: \$450,000 for capital upgrades at two veterans camps, “which is the least defensible” expenditure of Legacy funds, he said.

The bill also would create a State Capitol Preservation Commission, which would receive \$550,000 to conduct pre-design work in preparation for bonding for capital improvements next year. Some legislators want the commission to examine whether the second floor balcony, overlooking the mall, could be reopened to the public. There is concern by others that work to bring the balcony into compliance with ADA standards would significantly affect the historical and aesthetic appearance of the building and could be a huge liability to the state.

— S. HEGARTY

EQB changes in policy bill

Reductions in the Environmental Quality Board’s duties, introduced in HF1360, sponsored by Rep. Paul Torkelson (R-Nelson Township), were successfully removed from an omnibus environment policy bill.

Torkelson offered the amendment to remove the EQB references because he said a fiscal note suggested higher costs than he anticipated, though he does not intend to drop the issue, he added. He sought to transfer many of the board’s responsibilities to the Clean Water Council.

The omnibus bill, HF1097, sponsored by Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings), was approved May 3 by the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee and May 4 as amended by the House Ways and Means Committee. It now goes to the House floor. A companion, SF692, sponsored by Sen. Dan Hall (R-Burnsville), has been rolled into a Senate omnibus environment policy bill sponsored by Sen. Bill Ingebrietsen (R-Alexandria).

Rep. Dan Fabian (R-Roseau) successfully offered another amendment that would increase from 25 to 100 the number of signatures required to petition the EQB for an environmental assessment worksheet and require that petitioners reside within the same or adjacent county as a proposed project.

Air pollutants can travel farther and impaired water can flow downstream further than the next county, said Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls). Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul) also said the proposed policy does not give credence to those who temporarily spend time near a proposed project, such as in child care centers and group homes.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) unsuccessfully offered an amendment to delete the county residency and 100 required signatures. The Fabian amendment passed 8-6 along party lines; Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake) abstained.

Other environmental policy provisions in the bill include:

- developing an “Adopt-a-WMA” program;
- reducing the non-state matching grant amount for trail construction from 50 percent to 25 percent; and
- allowing Lutsen Resort to increase the amount of water it may take from Poplar Lake stream for snowmaking.

The allowance would be contingent upon meeting water flow standards within the trout stream. John Lenczewski, Minnesota Trout Unlimited executive director, cautioned that lower water levels may result in fish kill if the stream freezes due to snowmaking activities.

Dill, who sponsored the water consumption amendment, said due to the extreme vertical grade of the trout stream, few fish are found along the two-mile section where water could be drawn. Also, the ski resort must meet minimum flow standards before being allowed to withdraw water.

In all, more than 15 bills are rolled into the omnibus bill, including the use of pesticides

on land and new regulations to control the spread of aquatic invasive species.

— S. HEGARTY

Game & Fish

Vets' hunting preference approved

The Department of Natural Resources would be able to give some service members and veterans first preference in lottery drawings for certain hunting or fishing licenses or permits, under a bill passed 123-6 by the House May 2.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim O'Driscoll (R-Sartell), HF836 would allow the DNR to first license those who have received a Purple Heart or who have a 100 percent service-related disability.

However, the bill does not include licenses or permits to hunt moose, elk or prairie chickens.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd) is the sponsor.

— S. HEGARTY

Health & Human Services

MinnesotaCare reform bill passed

The Healthy Minnesota Contribution Program would move certain MinnesotaCare enrollees to private health care insurance, under a bill passed 70-62 by the House April 28.

Sponsored by Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud), HF8 would give a state subsidy to low-income adults without children, and if approved by a federal waiver, low-income adults with children to purchase their own health care insurance. Those with family gross incomes between 133 percent and 275 percent of the federal poverty guidelines would meet the requirement for the subsidy. The bill now awaits action by the full Senate. Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie) is the Senate sponsor.

DFL leaders said the bill amounts to an insurance exchange, an accusation Republicans objected to.

"Obviously this is not an insurance exchange; this is a way for Minnesotans to purchase individual health care," said House Majority Leader Matt Dean (R-Dellwood), adding the legislation provides a state-led solution to reform health care. "Minnesota should lead and not follow in health care going forward."

House Minority Leader Paul Thissen

(DFL-Mpls) said the bill offers "affordable health care to people that do not really exist."

"The winners in this bill are big insurance and special interest," he said.

Under the bill, a person would pay a monthly contribution based on age and income. For example, a person under age 21 would pay \$122.79, and those 60 years and older would pay \$357.19, although a sliding fee scale would be established by the health and human services commissioners.

— H. LONG

Adjustments of MinnesotaCare tax

When federal health care reform legislation is scheduled to be implemented next year, Minnesota would likely see a migration from some residents using MinnesotaCare to Medicaid. That is the contention of supporters of HF1584, sponsored by House Majority Leader Matt Dean (R-Dellwood), which would direct the commissioners of the Revenue Department and Minnesota Management & Budget to adjust the MinnesotaCare tax on health care providers if such a decrease of residents using MinnesotaCare were to result in a 25 percent cushion in the anticipated fund expenditures.

The bill was approved by the House Taxes Committee on May 2 and referred to the House Ways and Means Committee. It has no Senate companion.

The bill would direct the Revenue Department and Minnesota Management & Budget to annually review the Health Care Access Fund and reduce the MinnesotaCare provider taxes and the 1 percent tax on the premium revenue of nonprofit health plan companies, if projected fund revenues, plus any projected balance, exceeds 125 percent of projected fund expenditures. The MinnesotaCare provider tax rate is 2 percent of gross revenues and applies to health care providers, hospitals, surgical centers and wholesale drug distributors. Revenues from the provider tax and the tax on nonprofit health plan premiums are deposited into the fund.

Dean said that although the fund is projected to be depleted over the next 12-15 months, implementation of federal health care reform would likely result in fewer MinnesotaCare users and an accumulation of funds that would necessitate readjustment of the MinnesotaCare tax.

The bill would not only help balance the Health Care Access Fund, "but more importantly, carry on the discussion of what

is going to happen with our MinnesotaCare 2 percent tax, what is going to happen with MinnesotaCare and keep that discussion moving forward," Dean said during an April 27 hearing in the House Health and Human Services Reform Committee.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) reminded tax committee members that the bill would be potentially influenced by other proposed health care reform bills currently moving through the House.

"I want to caution people that based on some other policies being considered it is pretty shaky right now," Loeffler said. "We need to watch this before we move forward."

MinnesotaCare is a state health coverage program for low-income individuals and families who do not have access to employee-sponsored health insurance.

— H. LONG

Psychiatric hospital wants expansion

The recently opened PrairieCare children's and adolescent psychiatric hospital wants to expand its 20-bed facility. It needs legislative approval because of an existing moratorium on construction of new hospitals.

Sponsored by House Speaker Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove), HF1018 would amend an existing moratorium exception that first allowed construction of the 20-bed hospital, by adding that the permitted project includes expansion for the hospital for up to 50 beds.

The bill states that no further public interest review by the Department of Health is necessary to grant the exception. The bill was approved by the House Health and Human Services Reform Committee and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee. Its companion, SF742, sponsored by Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont), awaits action by the full Senate.

Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Cloud) cast the lone dissenting vote, saying he believes the exception granting bed expansion for inpatient mental health facilities doesn't address the root of the problem.

"Too many times we focus on the inpatient market," Hosch said. "We should be looking at more outpatient services that aren't as expensive and help prevent the need for inpatient services."

The hospital moratorium has been in existence since the early 1980s. It was enacted to prevent overbuilding hospital facilities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Since that time, the Legislature has granted 24 exceptions, including in 2009 to add the 20-bed PrairieCare children and

adolescent psychiatric inpatient facility.

Sue Abderholden, executive director for NAMI Minnesota, said the organization supports the bill, but stressed that if the Legislature reduces mental health grants for children, a measure currently contained in proposed Senate legislation, the need for more inpatient beds will continue to increase.

Rep. Patti Fritz (DFL-Faribault) cited the story of one of her constituents whose child was recently admitted to an inpatient psychiatric hospital in Montana because of a bed capacity shortage in Minnesota.

"We do not need to be sending our kids to Montana," she said.

— H. LONG

Conferees plan more 'heavy lifting'

Conferees began working on the details of the House and Senate omnibus health and human services finance bill (HF927/SF760*) and plan to tackle some of the substantive differences next week, said Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie).

"We will be doing more heavy lifting next week," Hann said during a May 3 hearing where conferees adopted several technical language differences between the House and Senate bills. Hann chairs the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

Major issues conferees expect to discuss include the Consumer Health Opportunities and Innovative Care Excellence (CHOICE) flexibility and funding Medicaid reform initiative, which House Health and Human Services Finance Committee Chairman Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) introduced as a more developed definition of the \$300 million federal global Medicaid waiver included in the House bill. Abeler and House Health and Human Services Reform Committee Chairman Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud) said they are working toward key reform concepts and objectives, including pay-for-value and care coordination to reduce costs and improve outcomes for public program recipients.

"Right now the door to Minnesota-made reform is closed," Abeler said. "CHOICE is the key that opens the door for us to move forward with nation-leading reforms to reduce costs and improve outcomes for the people we serve."

Gottwalt said reforms offered in the bill, including the CHOICE initiative, "transform the current system into a person-centered model that drives value, harnesses innovation and improves quality of care and quality of life for health care consumers."

Late last month Human Services

Commissioner Lucinda Jesson wrote a letter to the committee detailing 41 concerns she has about the bills that outline \$1.6 billion in cuts to projected General Fund spending in the next biennium. Gov. Mark Dayton's health and human services budget proposal includes an \$851 million reduction in projected General Fund health and human services spending.

Gottwalt said the committee wants to hear more from the Dayton administration. "We simply need more money to continue to do the things we are doing," he said.

Abeler said the job of committee members has been to "prioritize spending and focus on people instead of programs.

"We take this responsibility to heart, and hope the Dayton administration will join our work."

— H. LONG

Higher Education

Conferees take testimony on cuts

Higher tuition, reduced class offerings and a questionable future.

Those were some of the concerns raised at the May 3 meeting of the omnibus higher education finance conference committee — its first gathering since April 14. No action was taken.

Both the House and Senate plans would reduce spending by \$411 million (14.1 percent) from the forecast for the upcoming biennium, and 11 percent from current biennium spending. Sponsored by Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls) and Senate President Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville), HF1101*/ SF924 calls for \$241 million more in reductions compared to the budget proffered by Gov. Mark Dayton.

The Senate bill calls for an 18.9 percent General Fund reduction to the University of Minnesota; the House, 17.7 percent; and the governor, 6 percent. The respective percentages for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system are 13.3 percent, 15.9 percent and 6 percent. However, the House increases the base funding for the state grant program by \$27 million, the Senate \$7 million.

"We expect to be part of the solution, but the cuts proposed for fiscal 2012, in my judgment, is way too big, especially on the heels of \$190 million that was reduced from the university's state resources in this current biennium," said University President Robert Bruininks. He said tuition increases



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks testifies before the omnibus higher education finance conference committee May 3 about how the proposed funding reductions would affect the university and the state.

should make up no more than one-third of the solution.

Both bills limit tuition increases at state universities to 4 percent per year. The Senate limits tuition increases at state colleges to 3 percent annually; the House 2 percent. Both also express expectations that tuition increases at the university be limited.

MnSCU Chancellor James McCormick said the system would like some flexibility. "The Board of Trustees and I share the commitment to increasing tuition by no more than 5 percent each year of the biennium. The 5 percent level has been in the planning parameter for our campuses."

It is estimated that by 2018, 70 percent of all jobs in Minnesota will require a postsecondary education. Some testifiers questioned how that can be met when state funding is proposed to be comparable to 1998.

"How can we grow an economy that is increasing dependent upon higher education by underfunding higher education?" said the Rev. Ted Tollefson, who teaches psychology at Metropolitan State University. "My guess is we can't do that."

— M. COOK

Lowering free senior tuition age

A bill to reverse a 2010 law and potentially help some senior citizens further their education was passed by the House.

Sponsored by Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls), HF821 would lower from 66 to 62 the age at which senior citizens could partake in a program that allows them to take courses at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system at no charge, other than course charges for materials or services, if there are seats available after all tuition-paying students have been accounted for. If taken for credit, an administrative fee must be paid.

Passed 126-4 by the House May 2, it now goes to the Senate where Senate President Michelle Fischbach (R-Paynesville) is the sponsor.

The language is also in the omnibus higher education finance bill that is currently in a conference committee.

— M. Cook

Local Government

House passes annexation bill

Property owners whose land sits on a municipal boundary line might have an easier time having it detached and annexed from one city to another.

Sponsored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker), and passed by the House 79-51 May 2, HF753 would allow property owners to petition to have their land detached and annexed as long as one of the two affected municipalities supports the switch. Current law states that both must agree.

With the support of a resolution from one of the affected cities, a property owner could take their case to an administrative law judge, who would have the power to order the detachment and annexation.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Sean Nienow (R-Cambridge) is the sponsor.

Howes said the proposed change is one of two recommendations from the Municipal Boundary Adjustment Advisory Task Force — a bipartisan panel assembled by the Legislature to review annexation laws. The task force issued its final report in 2009.

Rep. Bev Scalze (DFL-Little Canada) said she opposes the bill because it would reverse a 2006 law that requires both municipalities to agree to an annexation. She said that law is intended to prevent small cities from having to waste money on legal fees fighting annexation by larger cities in court.

“This is chipping away at that process where the Legislature and the governor and all the parties agreed to handle annexation,” she said.

— N. Busse

Zoning variance changes

Signed
by
the
governor

A Minnesota Supreme Court ruling last year made it next to impossible for local governments to grant zoning variances to property owners.

A new law is intended to fix the problem.

Sponsored by Rep. Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) and Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista), the law is designed in response to *Krummenacher v. City of Minnetonka*. In that case, the court interpreted statute to say that cities cannot grant variances to property owners if their properties could be put to reasonable use without a variance.

In effect, this meant local governments could no longer grant variances, except in rare circumstances. Supporters say the law would merely clarify the existing statute so that local governments can go on using the same standards that have been in place for decades.

In brief, the law states that cities, counties and townships may grant variances in cases where the property owner intends to use the property in a “reasonable manner” that does not conflict with the essential character of the locality.

The law is effective May 3, 2011.

HF52*/SF13/CH19

— N. Busse

Public Safety

Restraining order clarification

Potential changes to the state’s harassment restraining order could clear up state statute and remove an administrative barrier for victims.

Sponsored by Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen (R-Glencoe), HF469 would allow an application for a harassment restraining order to be filed in the county of residence of either party or in the county where the alleged harassment occurred.

Passed 128-0 by the House May 2, the bill now goes to the Senate where Sen. Roger Chamberlain (R-Lino Lakes) is the sponsor.

Because current statute doesn’t clearly give direction to the courts about filing a restraining order, this has led to inconsistent handling of requests, especially in Greater

Minnesota. Gruenhagen said advocates working with victims found they would appear in one county to help their clients file an order for petition, only to be told that they would have to go to another county to seek court protection.

Supporters previously said it would help in cases like when a victim tried to file the petition in a county of residence, but was told by a court clerk she had to file for a petition in the county where the incident took place. When the petitioner went to the second county she saw the perpetrator, who harassed her.

Gruenhagen said endorsements have been forwarded from a number of groups, including the Minnesota County Attorney’s Association and the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women.

Courts would also be permitted to waive filing fees for certain restraining order petitions. The fee can now be waived if the alleged acts would constitute criminal sexual conduct or gross misdemeanor or felony stalking. In order to be eligible for federal grants to combat violence crimes against women, states must certify their laws do not require victims of sexual assault, stalking or domestic violence bear the cost of filing for a protection order.

— M. Cook

Dispatch center consolidation

The state patrol is consolidating its 10 public safety answering points across the state to three: Duluth, Rochester and Roseville.

Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder) sponsors HF977 that would prohibit the closure or consolidation of any PSAPs. The bill was held over May 2 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee. Sen. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd) sponsors SF1365, which awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

The bill would also require the Department of Public Safety to report to the Legislature by Dec. 1, 2011, on the current dispatch system and any proposed changes.

A 2003 law mandated a study and report of PSAP consolidations, and former Gov. Tim Pawlenty created a work group in 2009 to develop a comprehensive strategy regarding the consolidation of all state PSAPs. The current plan, in part, comes from the work group.

PSAPs answer 911 and non-emergency calls with the purpose of dispatching state patrol services. In Greater Minnesota, operators also dispatch Department of Natural Resources

officers and Department of Transportation vehicles, such as snowplows. Current centers slated to close are in Brainerd, Detroit Lakes, Mankato, Marshall, St. Cloud, Thief River Falls and Virginia.

"This is not in the best interests of the citizens of the state of Minnesota," Rep. John Ward (DFL-Brainerd) told the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance Committee April 14. "This is going to cause some significant public safety problems and issues for us."

Cornish and Ward expressed concern about the potential quality of service, in part, because technology doesn't always work as it should, and that more localized dispatchers know the area, such as landmarks commonly used for directions, better than someone hundreds of miles away.

Col. Mark Dunaski, state patrol chief, told the public safety committee he is "100 percent certain" the change would not compromise public safety.

DPS Deputy Commissioner Mary Ellison told the transportation committee three PSAPs average less than 10 calls per day.

The consolidation is not just about a cost savings, although it is expected to save \$1 million annually. Dunaski said all non-metro centers are "significantly understaffed" based on recommendations in a 2004 legislative report, and that 34 additional staffers would be needed if all centers were kept open. "The current level of staffing would be more than adequate to accommodate the workload at three consolidated centers." However, about 43 radio communication officers would potentially need to relocate.

He said the Transportation and Public Safety departments support the consolidation plan.

— M. COOK

State Government

Conferees finish 'easy part'

A plan to review and possibly eliminate state agencies was among several provisions adopted by House and Senate conferees for HF577/SF1047*, the omnibus state government finance bill.

Sponsored by Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) and Sen. Mike Parry (R-Waseca), the bill would fund state government operations for the 2012-2013 fiscal biennium. In their second official meeting, members of the bill's conference committee voted to adopt policy provisions

in which there were few or no differences between the House and Senate language.

"That was the easy part," Lanning said shortly before adjourning the meeting May 3.

Among the provisions they adopted was the plan to create a "Sunset Advisory Commission." The bipartisan group would be tasked with recommending the abolishment or reorganization of state agencies based on certain criteria like duplicative services.

Other provisions adopted include:

- limiting the number of assistant and deputy commissioners to no more than one each per agency, excluding the Department of Veteran Affairs;
- requiring the Administration Department to issue a request for proposals for a "strategic sourcing" initiative to save money on state procurement; and
- requiring the Revenue Department to absorb any potential budget cuts in its administrative support functions first, rather than its tax compliance and enforcement programs.

Conferees did not discuss the bill's fiscal provisions. Overall, the House version of the bill proposes spending \$601.6 million from the General Fund (a 34 percent reduction), while the Senate version would spend \$371.3 million (a 59 percent reduction). Lanning said conferees have not yet received budget targets from House and Senate leadership, and will not begin adopting language on appropriations until they do.

Parry said conferees will likely meet again on May 6.

— N. BUSSE

Federal debt concerns

Almost one-third of the state's total budget comes from federal funding. With the federal government racking up an ever-increasing amount of debt, some wonder about the impact on Minnesota if Uncle Sam were to go bust.

Sponsored by Rep. Keith Downey (R-Edina), HF545 contemplates just that scenario. The bill would direct state agencies to do contingency planning in case a federal fiscal crisis impacts the state budget.

The House State Government Finance Committee laid the bill over May 5. A vote could come as early as May 6. There is no Senate companion.

According to the U.S. Treasury Department, the United States' total outstanding public debt stands at more than \$14.3 trillion. For the current fiscal year,

the Congressional Budget Office projects a deficit of \$1.5 billion — 9.8 percent of the gross domestic product.

Downey called the bill a "good, prudent planning step." He said the federal government will likely begin shifting costs to states when it can no longer accumulate debt.

"The genesis for this bill is the fact that the federal government essentially is broke," he said at a May 3 hearing.

Opponents argued the bill's proponents are motivated by politics rather than prudence.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said fears of the U.S. government defaulting on its debt are overblown, and that Downey's bill is premised on a "partisan fantasy" about financial Armageddon.

"I think your bill should also consider things like asteroid collisions, nuclear war, extraterrestrial invasion, coup d'état ... That's, to me, the kind of scenarios your bill is anticipating," Winkler said.

Others said the threat is real. Rep. King Banaian (R-St. Cloud) said that by 2020, the national debt is projected to reach 90 percent of the GDP — a figure which some economists consider a "magic number" that can trigger a crisis.

Banaian said the government might choose to alleviate the debt by printing more money, which would trigger inflation — something he said would also impact the state.

To assuage concerns about partisanship, Committee Chairman Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) suggested amending the bill's language to remove references to "federal government insolvency" and inserting less controversial terms. Downey said he would confer with other committee members and propose alternative language.

— N. BUSSE

Taxes

Conferees affirm: No new taxes

Senate and House tax conferees aligned with the governor by agreeing to support some minor tax provisions, including doing away with the sales tax on ringtones. But Senate Taxes Chairwoman Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen) told Revenue Commissioner Myron Frans the House and Senate will stand firm on their position of not raising taxes to balance the budget. She said the governor's proposal for a new tax rate on the state's highest earners puts Minnesota on the wrong track and will make Minnesota less competitive.

Her comments came during the May 3 meeting of the conference committee trying to meld the differences between the House and Senate on HF42*/SF27, the omnibus tax bill. “The taxes you are relying on increase volatility and are regressive. ... I ask you for evidence that the governor is concerned about competitiveness. If we keep raising taxes we will never reach the goals of stability and competitiveness,” she said.

Frans, however, said the governor’s position is about putting stability into the state’s budget and defended his provisions as making the state more competitive. He pointed to the research and development credits, and said businesses want a balanced approach that will also protect a trained workforce.

Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) cautioned members to “think holistically about the whole thing.” She said volatility in the state’s tax structure hampers growth.

“We have to have adequate resources to fund the government we want. We should look at things in totality.” She is concerned that with the May 23 constitutional end-of-session deadline looming, compromise remains elusive, especially with committees not yet having targets and revenue issues not being confined to the tax committee.

“Do you know what the plan is to get that money out of the bills so the negotiations can start and the real revenue discussion can begin here?” Lenczewski said.

Ortman said the topic of volatility “may be

a distraction at this point, but we are saying competitive comes first and we can’t do this with new taxes.”

Provisions agreed on by the conference committee include:

- exempting the purchase of ringtones from sales and use tax at a cost of \$410,000 to the General Fund in the 2012-2013 biennium;
- defining advertising and promotional direct mail and allowing direct mail to be sourced to the address of the purchaser;
- eliminating the accelerated remittance schedules for vendors with annual sales tax collection of at least \$12,000 for all months except for June payments, effective for all payments due after July 1, 2011; and
- a specific property tax exemption for attached machinery for a proposed electric generation facility in Fairmont that would need to be built by Jan. 1, 2015.

The conference committee is scheduled to reconvene May 10.

— L. SCHUTZ

Law change brings windfall

Some landowners are receiving an incentive payment from the state that is more than double what they pay per acre in property taxes.

Approximately 1,700 owners of land enrolled in the state’s Sustainable Forest Resource Management program are the beneficiaries of an unanticipated consequence

of a 2009 law change that has them receiving \$15.67 per acre in fiscal year 2011, when, on average, their property tax is \$6.16 per acre.

The Sustainable Forest Incentive Act was created by the Legislature in 2001 to encourage landowners to make a long-term commitment to sustainable forestry by meeting certain criteria. As an incentive, owners are eligible to receive a state payment, but not less than \$7 per acre in any year.

According to a Department of Revenue memo distributed during the omnibus tax bill conference committee May 3, the windfall comes from a 2008 legislative change that the department tried to address after modifications were made to the 2b tax classification previously used for timberland calculations.

John Hagen, director of the department’s Property Tax Division, said the classification changed to include “all kinds of rural vacant land.”

He said the department realized that the 2b classification could no longer be used to provide an accurate measure of the timber land value. However, after the land was shifted to a 2c classification, the land value average for 2c lands came in at almost double the prior year’s value. “We had erroneously surmised that 2c managed forest lands would have a similar average value to that of the 2b time lands,” Hagen wrote in an October 2010 letter to program participants. “The unanticipated land value resulted in a near doubling of the SFIA payment.”

Both the House and Senate positions in the omnibus tax bill propose to modify the program. Senate Taxes Committee Chairwoman Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen) questioned Commissioner Myron Frans as to why the governor doesn’t support a similar modification.

“We understand there is a problem that needs to be addressed, but we don’t have a proposal at this time,” he said.

Ortman said her analysis shows that many of the property owners are from out-of-state. “So we are subsidizing them well beyond what they are paying. This is a troubled program.”

— L. SCHUTZ

Voters permissions to raise revenue

Voters could decide whether the number of legislators needed to pass a bill to increase revenue should be changed from a simple majority to three-fifths of each house’s membership.

Similar amendments have been placed on constitutions in 15 other states, Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Mazeppa) told the

REVENUE RESPONSE



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Revenue Commissioner Myron Frans, right, responds to a question as Assistant Commissioner Matt Massman, listened during a May 3 meeting of the omnibus tax conference committee.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Steve Drazkowski, left, sponsor of a proposed constitutional amendment that would require a three-fifths vote to enact a law imposing or increasing a property tax rate or levy, and Phil Krinkie, president of The Taxpayers League of Minnesota, who supports the measure, listen to a question from a member of the House Taxes Committee during a May 2 hearing.

House Taxes Committee. His motivation for HF1598, which he sponsors, comes from constituents who “clear and loudly say that we need to rein in spending. This amendment would do that.”

The bill would put before the voters during the 2012 general election a question of whether to approve an amendment to the state constitution that any bill that increases the state income, sales or property taxes require three-fifths of each house of the Legislature to vote in the affirmative. The committee approved the bill and sent it to the House Ways and Means Committee where it was approved and moved to the House floor.

Norann Dillon of Plymouth is frustrated that it seems easier for legislators to raise taxes than to focus on the spending component. “You are going to have to build consensus to raise taxes, and I don’t see that as a bad thing. I see this as a good thing for taxpayers. There will be more cooperation here among legislators.”

Jay Kiedrowski, a senior fellow at the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a former state finance commissioner, opposes the bill, saying it puts Minnesota on a very “slippery slope of governance.” If implemented, it could negatively affect state and local credit ratings, increase the cost of borrowing; and the impingements on raising revenue could also

affect how quickly the state could respond financially to emergency situations, he said.

With several bills having been introduced asking for constitutional amendments DFLers questioned if Republicans are choosing to govern by constitutional amendment.

“Is it the philosophy of the Republican Party that we should abandon representative democracy and move to where voters vote on significant matters? It does seem like we are really changing 150 years of how we run government here,” said Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul).

Since amendment proposals don’t need to be acted on until next year, Rep. Lyndon Carlson, Sr. (DFL-Crystal) asked why they are being taken up now.

“We want people to be talking about the issues over the summer,” Drazkowski said.

— L. SCHUTZ

Transportation

Carbon monoxide awareness

Carbon monoxide is colorless, odorless and deadly. Its consequences could become part of important teenage learning.

Rep. Andrea Kieffer (R-Woodbury) sponsors HF650 that would require the Department of Public Safety to include

information on carbon monoxide poisoning in driver’s education training, would require a question about carbon monoxide on the driver’s exam and would require the department to include information about carbon monoxide in the driver’s manual.

The bill was approved April 29 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee. It is also included in the omnibus transportation policy bill, HF1068. A companion, SF1042, sponsored by Sen. Chuck Wiger (DFL-Maplewood), has been held over for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

The impetus for what would be known as “Tyler’s Law” came from a December tragedy when Tyler Lavers, a sophomore at the University of Minnesota, was accidentally killed when installing stereo speakers in his car.

He went to the family’s cabin and backed his car into the garage to be closer to the tools and better lighting. With the garage door open, he started the car at some point to test his speakers.

“We later learned that in as little as two to five minutes Tyler was likely unconscious and was most likely dead in 15,” Jeff Lavers, Tyler’s father, told the committee March 16. His mother found him lying in the back of the car, under the speakers.

“Despite a ventilated garage, the very cold air created a higher output of carbon monoxide from his engine,” Jeff Lavers said. “Combined with a confined space allowed this deadly poison to concentrate where he was and ultimately kill him.

“Only now am I coming to grips with the fact that the only thing that could have kept Tyler alive was knowledge, knowledge we are quite sure very few of us have.”

It is estimated that 15-20 Minnesotans die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning.

— M. COOK

Green-lighting a diversion program

A driver’s license reinstatement diversion program established in 2009 may be green-lighted for two more years and expanded.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Red Wing), HF387 would extend the driver’s license diversion pilot project that is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2011, for another two years. It would also permit counties to establish a program, not just cities.

Approved 130-0 by the House May 2, the bill goes to the Senate where Sen. Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson) is the sponsor.

The program provides a different avenue of intervention into the problem of people driving without a license, Kelly said. It is directed at people who want to get valid, but for various reasons, such as limited finances, are unable to do so.

Under the program, eligible participants charged with driving after suspension or revocation, but have not yet entered a plea can participate. In exchange for a diversion driver's license, participants must maintain insurance; make regular payments toward the outstanding fines; and complete a class that teaches life and financial management skills. Offenders pay for program costs.

Duluth, St. Paul, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights took part in the pilot program and Isanti joined in July 2010. The public safety commissioner may permit other cities to establish a program.

As of Dec. 31, 2010, the program had 1,781 eligible participants, of which the average participant had seven outstanding citations with an average balance of \$1,700.

"This program has had a 77 percent success rate. It has returned close to \$500,000 back to these cities," Kelly said.

— M. COOK

Obtaining a disability plate

Things could get easier for people wanting a disability license plate for their motorcycle.

Sponsored by Rep. Ron Shimanski (R-Silver Lake) and Sen. Al DeKruif (R-Madison Lake), HF1094/SF478* would modify issuance of a disability plate for motorcycles.

Approved May 2 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee, the bill was sent to the House floor. It was passed 62-0 by the Senate March 24.

Under current law, a person is allowed one handicap placard and one set of handicap license plates, although individuals may apply to the State Council on Disability for a second set. When the second set is for a motorcycle, the council has generally given its approval. The bill would put approval into law.

"People with disability plates on their vehicles are looking at the price of gasoline and wanting to utilize their motorcycle more in transportation," Shimanski said. "This simply clarifies the statute that allows Driver and Vehicle Services to issue disability plates for a motorcycle for a person that may already have disability certification on another motor vehicle."

Tony Larson, who became a right leg

amputee after he was hit by a roadside bomb in Iraq, said his personal vehicle has his handicap plates and his placard is used with his wife's vehicle. "I have no third option to put one on my motorcycle," he said. Without a handicap plate or placard he has to walk from further out in a parking lot. "It's quite a distance, especially since I just got a new prosthesis and am learning how to walk after five months of not being able to walk on a prosthesis."

— M. COOK

Omnibus policy bill approved

An omnibus transportation policy bill is on its way to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee), HF1068, as amended, contains provisions ranging from license plates and vehicle lights, to driver's training and speed limit violations on a person's driving record. It was approved April 29 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee. A companion, SF920, sponsored by Sen. Joe Gimse (R-Willmar), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Among the provisions in the bill are HF615, sponsored by Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), which allows the classroom/theory portion of driver's education training to be completed through an online program approved by the Department of Public Safety. Sponsored by Rep. Andrea Kieffer (R-Woodbury), HF650 would require carbon monoxide poisoning awareness be part of the driver's education curriculum and be part of the driver's license knowledge test.

Rep. Bruce Anderson (R-Buffalo Township) sponsors HF867 that would allow issuance of an instruction permit to someone who has not yet completed the classroom phase of driver's education if certain other conditions are met.

Other bills in the omnibus bill include:

- HF537, sponsored by Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), which would prohibit speed limit violations of up to and including 10 mph over the speed limit in 55 and 60 miles per hour zones from going on the driving record;
- HF676, sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Good Thunder), which would clarify that vehicles used by DNR conservation officers can be unmarked when registered as tax-exempt;
- HF808, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth), which would require the Driver and Vehicle Services Division in the Department of Public Safety to include a mechanism for vehicle owners to donate \$2

for organ donation educational programs as part of vehicle registration and renewal;

- HF906, sponsored by Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia), which would require the Department of Transportation to designate by March 15, 2015, one of two specific options as the alternative route for realigning a stretch of Trunk Highway 53 near Virginia, with construction on the new route to begin by June 1, 2015;
- HF1412, sponsored by Rep. Rich Murray (R-Albert Lea), which would allow electric-assisted bicycles on state trails and paths.

Also receiving committee approval was HF1310, as amended. Sponsored by Rep. Ron Shimanski (R-Silver Lake), it is an agency bill that contains policy and housekeeping provisions sought by the Public Safety and Transportation departments.

— M. COOK

Changes to net federal funds

Minnesota could receive federal funds to educate people about vehicular child restraints.

Sponsored by Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), HF1214 was approved April 29 by the House Public Safety Policy and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance Committee and sent to the House floor. A companion SF1124, sponsored by Sen. Pam Wolf (R-Spring Lake Park), was held over April 26 by the Senate Transportation Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

In 2009, a law was enacted requiring children under age 8 and shorter than 4-foot-9 to be fastened in an appropriate child restraint, including a booster seat. The law applied to all passenger vehicles as well as school buses. Last year, a school bus exemption was passed.

"The language that we chose to use in 2010 made us ineligible for the federal grant of \$378,000," Hortman said. "We'd like to fix the language to make us eligible to receive that federal funding." The problem was that the language included type III vehicles that should not be exempted from the booster law.

According to a fact sheet from the Office of Traffic Safety, the federal dollars are used "for training of law enforcement, daycare providers, and child passenger safety advocates on child restraint. Equally important, a significant portion of the money is also used to provide child safety seats to Minnesota's needy families."

— M. COOK

Drawing the lines

Redistricting plan is far from bipartisan acceptance

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Redistricting happens every 10 years and with it comes the partisan rancor — so much so that the state has a long history of the courts completing the task of setting district boundaries because the Legislature can't reach agreement and get approval from the governor.

Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth) told members of the House Redistricting Committee May 3 that he had hopes that this year would be different.

"For the first time in 100 years, we could send a message to the citizens and come up with a plan that is bipartisan and signed by the governor. In terms of long-term policy, this is probably the most important thing anyone will do this session. This is much too important to relinquish our responsibility to the courts," he said.

The proposed House and Senate district boundaries were released May 2, and before the committee for consideration 24 hours later.

With testifier and DFL complaints of too little time for review of the maps, not enough public input, and questions over whether "communities of interest" are well-served, Marquart's hope for eventual bipartisan support appears to be in question.

The bill which lays out the map, HF1425, sponsored by Committee Chairwoman Sarah Anderson (R-Plymouth), was approved as amended along party lines. The House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee moved the bill to the House floor. Its companion, SF1248, sponsored by Sen. Geoff Michel (R-Edina), awaits action by the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

"Our goal was a fair process that recognizes the population shifts," Anderson said. She noted there were 14 committee meetings —

three in Greater Minnesota — to seek public input on the map that will shape the 2012 elections and for the next 10 years.

The proposed map reflects the state's population migration from the rural areas to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and the outflow from the cities' central core — all resulting in substantial suburban and exurban growth.

The redistricting plan keeps the number of House and Senate districts the same at 134 and 67 respectively. The ideal population in each House district would be 39,582 and 79,163 for the Senate. Current numbers are 36,713 and 73,425 respectively.

The plan appears to pit 20 House incumbents against each other in the next election — DFLers in five districts squaring off; Republicans in one district and incumbents from both parties in four districts. Most of the combined districts are located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The map with the new congressional lines for Minnesota's eight districts should be available by May 23, the end of session, Anderson said.

More time for consideration

It wasn't long into the meeting, with more than 30 testifiers, when Anderson took offense to one person's characterization that splitting the city of Mankato appears to be gerrymandering.

"I don't appreciate you using that term. We didn't do that," she responded.

Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) asked her to let the speaker finish, and the roomful of onlookers clapped, leading Anderson to pound the gavel and say, "You are out of order."

After calls for mutual respect, testimony resumed.

Anderson said the new map is based on the principles accepted by the committee last week, and stated the importance of keeping local jurisdictions together. "This plan would split 42 cities versus the current 46 splits," she said.

However, Maplewood Mayor Will Rossbach spoke to the problems his city would face if it were to be split among three House districts as proposed, instead of the current two.

"You are taking us away from our partners that we have joint powers agreements with. It is not a situation that will make it easier for us."

Several testifiers spoke to preserving the voting integrity of minority communities.

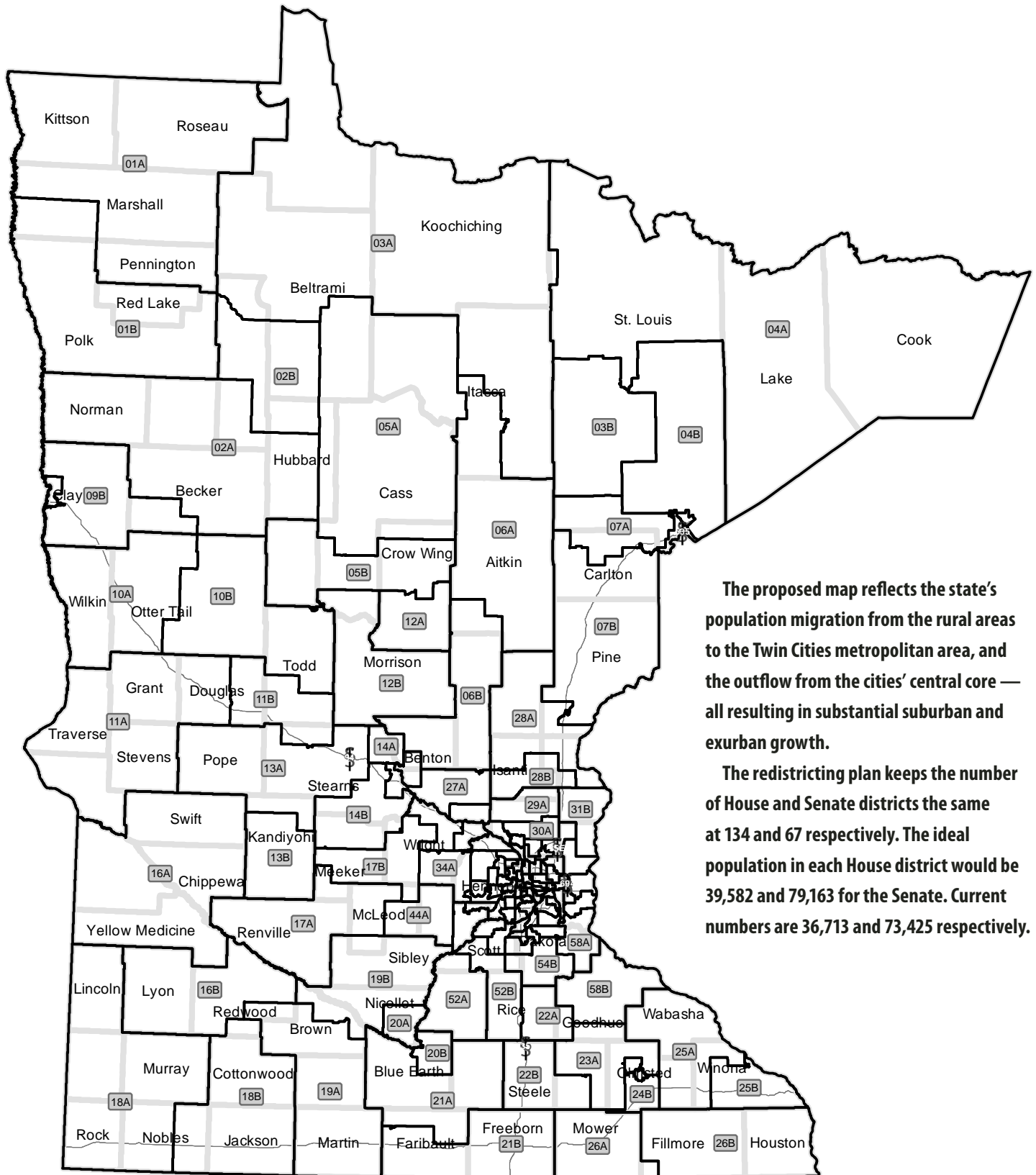
"I don't want to rush the process. It has dire implications for minority communities," said Gerardo Bonilla, a Latino organizer in the South Minneapolis/Richfield area. "From looking at a couple of districts, the cut up is disempowering to communities that exist there. It dilutes the power of the Latino vote. This process should not be rushed."

As DFLers called for more public review time, Republicans, including Rep. Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington), asked the DFL for their redistricting map. "Are you guys going to put out a plan? If not, fess up and say it," he said.

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), the committee's DFL lead, said she had hoped that the committee could develop a map that reflected all Minnesotans and would have bipartisan support. "I still feel that goal can be reached," she said.

She complimented Anderson for the model that she had developed and for giving them something to respond to. "I feel that we should take the time to continue to develop a plan from this committee to bring to the floor and ask for votes from both parties and pass with a significant number of votes." 🗳️

House Redistricting Committee proposed statewide map

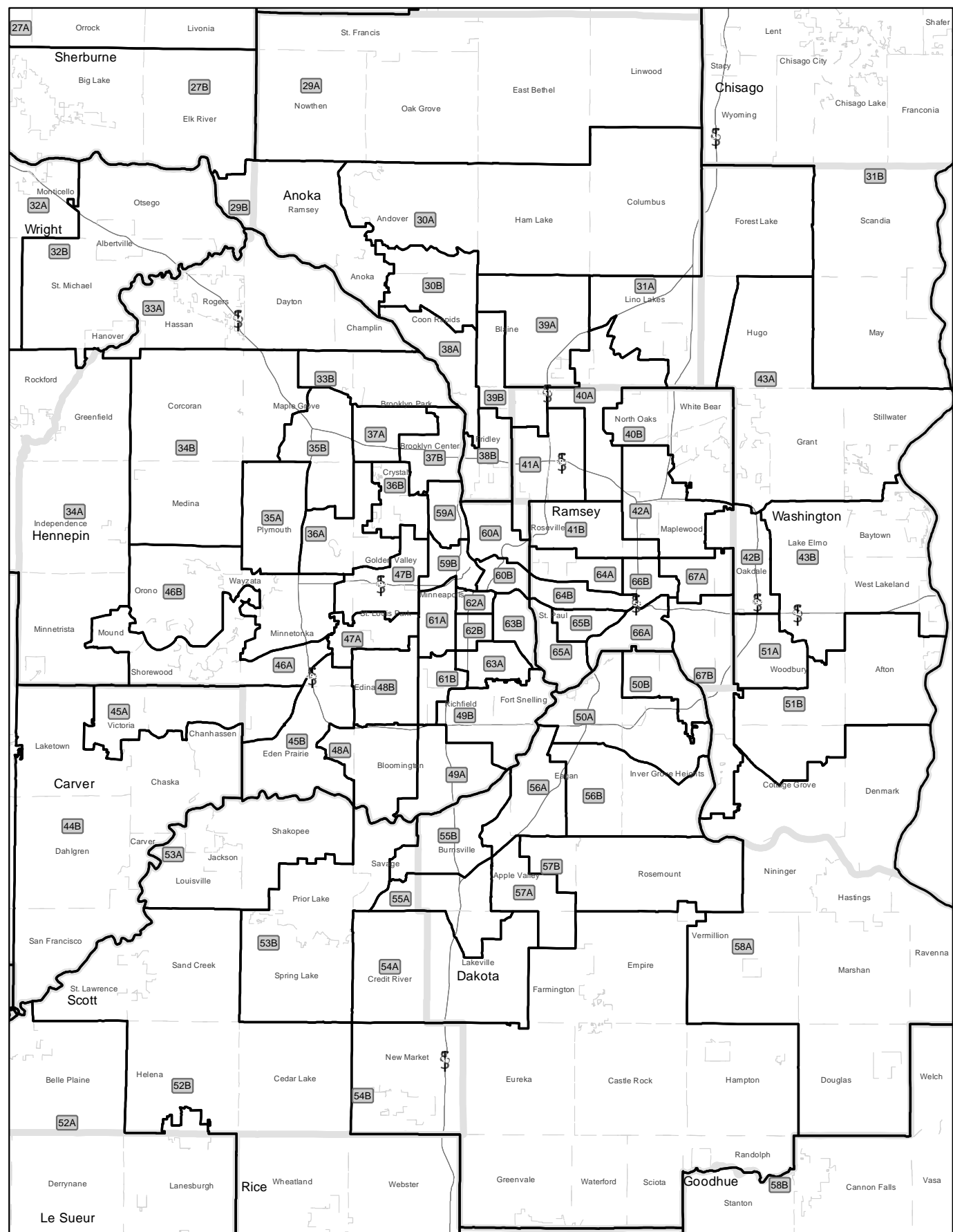


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Maps courtesy of the Legislative Coordinating Commission Geographic Information Services

House Redistricting Committee proposed metro map



BILL INTRODUCTIONS

MAY 2 - 5, 2011
HOUSE FILES 1617 - 1670

Monday, May 2

HF1617-Persell (DFL)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Embedded equipment and vehicles recovery standards provided.

HF1618-Peppin (R)

Government Operations & Elections

Governor appointment of the executive directors of specified state councils provided.

HF1619-Knuth (DFL)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Utilities solar energy standard created and solar energy regulated.

HF1620-Mullery (DFL)

Higher Education Policy & Finance

Small businesses and targeted group businesses purchasing laws applied to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

HF1621-Franson (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Todd County pier money appropriated.

HF1622-Shimanski (R)

Transportation Policy & Finance

Farm trucks governing definition and regulation modified.

HF1623-Kahn (DFL)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

State lottery authorized to offer games involving sports wagering and sports wagering pools, sports bookmaking under licenses issued by the director of the state lottery authorized and tax on licensed sports bookmaking imposed.

HF1624-Shimanski (R)

Taxes

Charter school property tax exemption status modified.

HF1625-Mariani (DFL)

Education Finance

School district expiring operating referenda term extended by two years.

HF1626-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Government Operations & Elections

Unclassified employees retirement program transfer of coverage provision clarified.

HF1627-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Government Operations & Elections

Crookston Township; service credit purchase for uncredited prior public employment authorized.

HF1628-Murphy, M. (DFL)

Government Operations & Elections

First class city teacher retirement fund associations definition for vesting added, and leave of absence, retirement, survivor and disability benefits eligibility modified.

HF1629-Howes (R)

Rules & Legislative Administration

Explore Minnesota Tourism Council modified.

HF1630-McElpatrick (R)

Judiciary Policy & Finance

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

HF1631-Kriesel (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Sports pool tipboard games authorized.

HF1632-Clark (DFL)

Health & Human Services Finance

Chemical dependency aggressive initiative provided, alcoholic beverage tax increased to fund initiative, obsolete language eliminated and technical changes made and money appropriated.

HF1633-Norton (DFL)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Gross profit use clarified.

HF1634-Hamilton (R)

Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance

Food law enforcement provided, technical and conforming changes made, obsolete provisions repealed and penalties imposed.

HF1635-Hamilton (R)

Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance

Pet dealer definition amended for the purposes of the law regulating sales of dogs and cats.

HF1636-Franson (R)

Health & Human Services Reform

Vaccines containing human DNA labeling required.

HF1637-Daudt (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Transaction agents required to disclose information on lenders for residential mortgage loans, and additional data required in foreclosure notices.

HF1638-Hilty (DFL)

Taxes

Local government aid distribution modified.

HF1639-LeMieur (R)

Transportation Policy & Finance

Drivers' licenses; being on track to graduate from high school made a condition of obtaining instruction permits and driver's licenses for applicants under age 18.

HF1640-McNamara (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

RIM Conservation Reserve funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1641-Beard (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Conservation improvement program modified.

HF1642-Banaian (R)

Education Reform

Federal special education requirement special instruction and services provided.

HF1643-Mazorol (R)

Government Operations & Elections

Certificates issued to business entities simplified, effective date of agent resignations modified, notice provided to organizations revised, alternative names allowed, business entities redefined, certificates to business trusts and municipal power agencies eliminated and access to and the treatment of certain data regulated.

Tuesday, May 3

HF1644-Wagenius (DFL)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Watercraft surcharge and aquatic plant management fees modified.

HF1645-Loeffler (DFL)

Government Operations & Elections

Hennepin County Soil and Water Conservation District terminated and duties transferred.

HF1646-Norton (DFL)

Health & Human Services Reforms

Child and adult foster care licensing moratorium repealed.

HF1647-Lanning (R)

Government Operations & Elections

Major general employee statewide retirement plans statutory salary scale and payroll growth actuarial assumptions revised.

HF1648-Mahoney (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Minnesota Science and Technology Authority funding provided.

HF1649-Hansen (DFL)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

West Saint Paul; North Urban Regional Trail grade separated crossing funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1650-Beard (R)

Civil Law

Department of Natural Resources electronic licensing data authorized for any civil, criminal, administrative or arbitration proceedings.

HF1651-Gunther (R)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Fast investment today program performance rewards created, tax benefits provided and money appropriated.

HF1652-Urdahl (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Cultural heritage funding provided for arts, history and cultural heritage, and money appropriated.

HF1653-McDonald (R)
Environment, Energy & Natural Resources
Policy & Finance
Delano; flood hazard mitigation funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

Wednesday, May 4

HF1654-Hornstein (DFL)
Commerce & Regulatory Reform
Gambling social and economic costs in Minnesota study required and money appropriated.

HF1655-Bills (R)
Government Operations & Elections
Public employees dues check off written request required.

HF1656-Bills (R)
Education Reform
Teacher's union financial report required.

HF1657-Laine (DFL)
Environment, Energy & Natural Resources
Policy & Finance
Black bear designated as the state mammal.

HF1658-Eken (DFL)
Taxes
Mahnom County; Island Lake Township aggregate materials tax imposition allowed.

HF1659-Franson (R)
Government Operations & Elections
Commissioner of administration required to enter into a contract for state agency real estate lease evaluation services, and length of time required for notice of cancellation of state leases increased.

HF1660-Nornes (R)
Taxes
Fergus Falls; border city development zone powers establishment and exercise authorized and money appropriated.

HF1661-Hoppe (R)
Ways & Means
Level of budgeted spending limited to 98 percent of the amount forecast to be collected in the biennium and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1662-Kiffmeyer (R)
Government Operations & Elections
Voters required to present photographic identification, photographic identification provided to voters at no charge, equal verification standards required for all voters and constitutional amendment proposed.

Thursday, May 5

HF1663-Davids (R)
Commerce & Regulatory Reform
Motor fuel franchise agreements that prohibit installation or operation of ethanol blender pumps barred.

HF1664-Bills (R)
Commerce & Regulatory Reform
Gold and silver coin designated as official legal tender.

HF1665-Gruenhagen (R)
Public Safety & Crime Prevention
Policy & Finance
Fifth-degree assault and domestic assault provisions added to crime of violence.

HF1666-Beard (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Retention elections for judges proposed, judicial performance evaluation commission created, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1667-Koenen (DFL)
Environment, Energy & Natural Resources
Policy & Finance
Minnesota Falls Dam on the Minnesota River near Granite Falls removal and construction of a rock rapids structure predesign and preliminary engineering funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF1668-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Government Operations & Elections
Duluth and Duluth Airport Authority; Public Employees Retirement Association optional correction of erroneous employee deductions and employer contributions provided.

HF1669-Murphy, M. (DFL)
Environment, Energy & Natural Resources
Policy & Finance
Wetland, wildlife and carbon sequestration credits purchase, reservation and disclosure required.

HF1670-Hoppe (R)
Transportation Policy & Finance
Pupil transportation; federal substance testing allowed to fulfill testing requirements for type III vehicle drivers.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Older Minnesotans

Estimated number of Minnesotans over age 65	600,000
Projected number 25 years from now, in millions.....	1.2
At that time, percent of all Minnesotan residents	25
Estimated number of Minnesotans over age 85 in 2000	90,000
Projected number in 2050.....	250,000
Estimated number of children in Minnesota living under the primary care of a grandparent or some older relative.....	71,000
Percent increase since 1990	100
Estimated number of Minnesotans over age 65 who need some kind of long-term care assistance with basic activities such as eating, dressing and bathing	95,000
Percent of care for older Minnesotans that is provided by family caregivers.....	90
In fiscal year 2010, average number of people served by the Alternative Care program, a state-funded cost-sharing program that supports certain home- and community-based services for eligible Minnesotans, age 65 and over.....	5,279
Amount spent providing the care, in millions	\$31.3
In fiscal year 2010, people served by the state's Elderly Waiver program that funds home- and community-based services for people age 65 and older who are eligible for Medical Assistance and require the level of care provided in a nursing home, but choose to reside in the community	26,779
Dollars spent on waiver services, in millions.....	\$302
Average monthly EW client population for fiscal year 2010	21,500
Average in 2007	17,284
In 2009, real median household income per Minnesotan age 65-plus	\$21,993
In 1999	\$22,210
In 1989	\$17,850
National average in 2009.....	\$21,299
Percent of Minnesotans ages 65 or older who volunteered within the past year.....	39.6
State rank.....	2
National average, as percent.....	28
Phone number for Senior LinkAge Line, the Board on Aging's free statewide information and assistance service.....	1-800-333-2433
Year that May was established by President Kennedy as Older Americans Month.....	1963

— M. Cook

Sources: Minnesota Board on Aging; Department of Human Services, including Project 2030 and Transform 2010; Minnesota State Demographic Center, including Minnesota Milestones 2011; Minnesota Compass.