

SESSION WEEKLY



DNR TAKES ON THE XBOX
SURPLUS QUICKLY GOES TO IOUs
SKOL VIKINGS
FAMILY CALLS MURDOCK HOME

HF2493 - HF2631

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
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Flashback to 1992 and 2002

No need for a helmet law

House members, in effect, told the U.S. Congress that they'd rather make their own laws, thank you.

The House Transportation Committee approved a resolution calling on Congress to back off its effort to coerce states into adopting motorcycle helmet laws.

At stake is up to \$11 million in funding earmarked for state transportation projects. If Minnesota and 24 other states don't change their laws to require all motorcyclists to wear helmets, the federal government won't take away that money; but it will make states spend it for motorcycle education and safety programs.

Minnesota only requires riders under age 18 to wear helmets.

Rep. Terry Dempsey (R-New Ulm), chief sponsor of the resolution, has several times in the past successfully fought mandatory helmet legislation.

The federal highways bill also calls for uniform seat belt and child restraint laws, which the state has adopted.

— Session Weekly March 6, 1992

State casino rejected

A proposal to establish a state-run casino in partnership with the state's Native American tribes was voted down in a House committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester), the measure would have imposed a 40 percent tax on revenue generated at the casino minus the amount paid out as prizes. The tax revenue would then be split 50/50 between the state and the tribes.

The Minnesota State Lottery would operate the casino, and if it were located in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, it could generate as much as \$500 million annually, said Lottery Director George Andersen.

Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) said that gambling revenue is an unfair way to deal with real needs in the state and that all should contribute if an issue is deemed worthy of public funds.

Bishop said that gambling revenue amounted to a user fee, not a tax.

— Session Weekly March 1, 2002

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SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Fourth-graders from Bel Air Elementary School in New Brighton sing patriotic songs during a Feb. 24 performance in the Capitol Rotunda.

— Photo by Andrew VonBank

Angling for more participation

DNR looks for ways to get more anglers and hunters into the great outdoors

By BOB GEIGER

Family togetherness experienced in the joy of catching, cleaning and cooking fresh fish or hunting game is losing out to the latest electronic gadget or video game release.

Between 2000 and 2010, participation rates of Minnesotans hooked on fishing or hunting decreased as a growing percentage of state residents made other choices on how to spend their leisure time. This has caught the attention of the Department of Natural Resources, which has proposed recruitment and retention efforts in HF2171, sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar).

The bill opens the door for the DNR to encourage outdoor activities, focusing on efforts to recruit and retain anglers, hunters and trappers of all ages.

Programs include retaining existing participants and expanding the amount of information available online in a variety of languages, particularly Spanish, to Minnesota's increasingly diverse population.

Great outdoors – a great moneymaker

Minnesota's hunting and fishing industry employs 55,000 people and generates \$5.8 billion in annual spending, according to the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses.

That \$5.8 billion includes \$1.6 billion in wages, \$430 million in federal taxes and \$415 million in state taxes.

Bottom line: Lifestyle choices are having an impact on the Minnesota State Constitution-protected livelihood of hunting and fishing.

"We have a problem right now because we are not selling enough hunting and fishing licenses in the state of Minnesota," Hackbarth recently told the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources

Policy and Finance Committee meeting. The committee spent two meetings this week reviewing the bill. No action has yet been taken.

How can this lack of participation in the outdoors be in the land of 10,000 lakes?

"It's the Xbox kids; getting them off the couch and outdoors," said Bob Meier, DNR director of policy and government relations.

While DNR officials cite electronics as a likely cause of decreased hunting and fishing participation, the department maintains an Internet presence that contains high-tech tools to promote hunter recruitment and retention.

Jay Johnson, hunter recruitment and retention coordinator with the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Division, said recruitment and retention efforts begin with awareness of the outdoors sport, and progress through interest, trial and continuing participation in and support of the activity.

Among the DNR's online offerings is a Google Earth Hunter Walking Trail application, a click-by-county tool that can be accessed at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/hwt/index.html>. Another is a Recreation Compass, which features 15

Did you know?

Hunting and fishing are protected by Article XIII, Section 12 of the Minnesota State Constitution.

Adopted in 1998, it states, "Hunting and fishing and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage that shall be forever preserved for the people and shall be managed by law and regulation for the public good."

layers of lakes and rivers, forests and parks, water trails and water access locations. It is available at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/compass.html>.

Ed Boggess, director of the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Division, said the department is adding more electronic features for anglers

and hunters who like to stay connected with the world.

For example, some state parks now offer Wi-Fi. "If you can't beat them, join them," Boggess said.

But getting outside is more

than just about recreation.

"One of the main things is we recognize that outdoor recreation is tied to a healthy lifestyle ... There's also a pretty direct tie between environmental conservation and supporting stewardship of those resources," Boggess said.

Declining participation

The decline in hunting and fishing participation in these popular Minnesota outdoor sports is falling as Minnesota's population rises.

Between 2000 and 2010, Minnesota's population increased 7.8 percent, from 4.9 million to 5.3 million, according to the U.S.



"We have a problem right now because we are not selling enough hunting and fishing licenses in the state of Minnesota."

— Rep. Tom Hackbarth
(R-Cedar)

First Reading continued from page 3

Census Bureau. Participation rates must keep pace with population increases to stay even. And census data indicates that Minnesota is below that threshold.

Declining participation has spurred conservation leaders to characterize the dip as a “long-term concern from both a cultural and resource management perspective.”

“It’s extremely important to keep the community engaged in outdoor activities for a number of reasons. We want to keep that community engaged so conservation remains important to the citizens of Minnesota,” said DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr.

According to a September 2011 report from the DNR and Minnesota Management & Budget, year-to-year retention rates for licensed anglers and hunters averaged 72 percent and 84 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2010.

During that period, the number of licensed

anglers 16 and older increased by 21,777 to just over 1.2 million – up just 1.8 percent over 10 years, according to the report.

The number of licensed Minnesota hunters fell by nearly 2.2 percent, or 11,612, to 524,854 from 2000 to 2010.

In terms of participation, the percentage of Minnesotans 16 and up licensed to fish has fallen from 40 percent in the late 1960s to 29 percent – with the steepest decline among adults ages 25 to 44.

Among hunters, participation held steady at 16 percent from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s before falling to 13 percent in 2010 – with the steepest declines coming from Minnesotans aged 16 to 44.

Boggess said the DNR is able to spend up to 5 percent of Heritage Enhancement Fund money generated by the Minnesota State Lottery for fishing and hunting retention and recruitment. That currently totals \$408,500 a year.

The DNR can bolster state funding by


On the prowl for wolf

One part of the DNR bill that is likely to increase hunting and trapping license sales is a wolf hunting season.

The bill includes a wolf-hunting license for \$26, with plans to sell up to 6,000 licenses for hunters and trappers to take a maximum of 400 wolves starting in late 2012 or early 2013.

Until recently, wolves had been protected by the federal Endangered Species Act. Minnesota took over management of the state’s estimated 3,000-wolf pack on Jan. 27 after the species was removed from the endangered species list.

applying for grants from private partners including the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and National Shooting Sports Foundation he says.

Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria) sponsors a companion, SF1943, which awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee. 

LITTLE MAN



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Four-year-old Garrett Hosch sits in his father’s chair and listens to the proceedings on the House floor Feb. 29. Garrett is the son of Rep. Larry Hosch.

HIGHLIGHTS

FEBRUARY 23 - MARCH 1, 2012

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees or divisions and other House activities held Feb. 23-March 1. 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 acted on by the governor.

Agriculture

Food safety regs in bill

Several amendments were added onto an agricultural omnibus bill before it was approved by the House Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Finance Committee March 1.

HF2398, sponsored by Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck), was referred to the House Civil Law Committee.

The largest addition to the bill is referred to as the Food Safety Bill, which moves enforcement of food safety regulations into a new chapter of law and grants authority for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to issue civil penalties under the new chapter, in addition to criminal or administrative penalties.

Other amendments would:

- enable the remaining portion of a 2010 Lutheran Social Services appropriation for disaster and mental health relief in rural communities to be expanded to more counties;
- exempt feed distributors who produce and use their own feed from being charged an inspection fee on the portion they use themselves; and
- allow a county to charge and collect a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per violation from public land owners who do not control obnoxious weeds on their land.

This last amendment was offered by Committee Chairman Rep. Rod Hamilton (R-Mountain Lake), who said farmers are complaining that thistles on land managed by the Department of Natural Resources are spreading to their properties. Private land owners can be fined.

"What's good for the goose is good for the gander," Hamilton said.

Sen. Doug Magnus (R-Slayton) sponsors the Senate companion, SF2061 which awaits

action by the Senate Agriculture and Rural Economics Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

Feed inspections become law

**Signed
by
the
governor**

A new law will allow the Department of Agriculture to inspect non-medicated feed operations and to issue a voluntary Good Manufacturing Practice certificate, which at least three foreign countries now require.

When the federal Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011 was passed, the issuance of GMP certifications for non-medicated feed stopped until new stricter federal rules can be adopted, which has not yet happened. There is no such certificate offered at the state level.

Now, countries such as Brazil and Mexico are requiring the certificates from either a state or federal government before accepting imports of non-medicated feed. Some feed manufacturers said the lack of acquiring a certificate has stopped trade to those countries and hurt their business. The new law will provide for state inspections so that import routes can reopen. When the U.S. Food and Drug Administration implements its new rules and certificate, the state certification program will cease.

Minnesota exports \$4.8 million of feed to Brazil annually.

Rep. Chris Swedzinski (R-Ghent) and Sen. Gary Dahms (R-Redwood Falls) sponsor the law, which was signed by Gov. Mark Dayton on March 1, and is effective the next day.

HF1926*/SF1527/CH124

— S. HEGARTY

Bonding

Environmental, flood requests heard

Sixteen bonding bills totaling \$132.1 million in environmental projects were laid over Feb. 29 by the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee, and will be considered for inclusion in the committee's bonding recommendations.

Funding for flood hazard mitigation

comprises \$69.1 million, or 52.3 percent, of the requests.

Grants provided by the state provide up to 50 percent of flood mitigation project costs. Projects considered this year came from across the state, and some carry high price tags.

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) asked how much the state plans to spend on flood mitigation.

"I know there's concern that this is a never-ending issue, but there is light at the end of the tunnel," said Kent Lokkesmoe, director of capital investment for the Department of Natural Resources. He estimates needed statewide flood mitigation costs at about \$100 million.

Of the seven flood-relief bills, the most expensive is HF2020, sponsored by Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), which would provide \$20 million for mitigation projects near Moorhead.

Other flood mitigation requests include:

- HF2196, sponsored by Rep. Dan Fabian (R-Roseau), which would provide \$17 million to help protect Oslo, a city of 330 residents located 19 miles north of Grand Forks, N.D. along the Red River;
- HF2215, a \$13 million appeal, sponsored by Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley), to help Bear Park in the Sandhill Watershed District, Climax, Felton, Nielsville, Shelly and Upper Becker Dam in the Wild Rice Watershed District; and
- HF2403, a \$9.2 million request, sponsored by Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth), for the Redpath and North Ottawa projects in the Bois de Sioux Watershed District.

The Minnesota Zoo is requesting \$20 million in HF2410, sponsored by Rep. Tara Mack (R-Apple Valley): \$15 million for asset preservation and \$5 million for new projects.

— B. GEIGER

Push is on for Nicollet Mall renovation

Minneapolis business leaders told a House committee that renovation of the Nicollet Mall is key to recruiting talented employees to Minnesota.

Sponsored by Rep. Bobby Joe Champion (DFL-Mpls), HF1400 would authorize \$25 million in bonding to fund the state's half of a proposed \$50 million renovation of

the downtown Minneapolis mall area.

The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee laid the bill over Feb. 28 for possible inclusion in its bonding recommendations.

Built in the 1960s, Nicollet Mall is home to some of the state's largest corporations. It has numerous retail outlets and restaurants and hosts a variety of civic events. The mall and its surrounding area host an estimated 140,000 workers on a daily basis.

Sarah Harris, chief operating office of the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District, said the mall currently suffers from significant deterioration. She said it was built with materials that are not well-suited to Minnesota's climate, and that it is used to an extent that was never envisioned.

Collin Barr, Midwest region president for Ryan Companies, called the Nicollet Mall Minnesota's "front porch to the world," and said investing in it would pay dividends for the whole state.

"Firms like U.S. Bank, Target Corporation, General Mills, Cargill and Medtronic all use Nicollet Mall as a key recruiting tool when

recruiting talent and other businesses to grow here in Minneapolis," Barr said.

Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls) sponsors the companion, SF1108, which awaits action by the Senate Capital Investment Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Business & Commerce

Scam regulation could increase

Scam and fraud regulations in Minnesota could soon intensify. Lawmakers are hoping to stop these crimes before they happen.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Atkins (DFL-Inver Grove Heights), HF343 would require telecommunications providers and money transmitters to change their policies to help the state prevent fraud. The bill received bipartisan support in the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee, which sent it to the House floor Feb. 29.

Atkins said that fraud affects innocent Minnesotans on a regular basis.

"You can't go a week without seeing it in the news," he said.

Under the bill, telecommunication companies would need to cooperate with state government by surrendering customer account information that could be helpful in a criminal investigation. Customers could also direct telecom providers to block international activity in their accounts.

Money transmitters would have to combat fraud by enacting anti-scam policies, paying anti-fraud fees, and increasing communication with consumers regarding outgoing money transfers.

The committee heard testimony from Jim Arlt, the director for the Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement Division of the Department of Public Safety. His mission is to investigate foreign giveaway and lottery scams in Minnesota, which cost residents millions of dollars each year. Arlt said that since 2007, his department has received over 100,000 complaints related to fraud.

"We got tired of telling people there was nothing they could do. ... There are things we could and should do," he said.

REAL KEEPER



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Carolyn Peterson sits in the gallery Feb. 29 with a 5-foot green foam walleye as a visual aid in support of a bill that would provide funding for Maplewood's Fish Creek Natural Area Greenway. The House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee held the bill over Feb. 29 for possible inclusion in its bonding recommendations to the House Capital Investment Committee.

Arlt explained that scammers are often part of organized crime rings. They target senior citizens, who may not realize that the people asking them for money are criminals.

"One family had to stop their mother from sending money by cutting her phone line and flattening her tires," Arlt said. The woman lost over \$800,000. Arlt voiced support for the bill, saying it would provide a "one-stop shop" for victims of scams.

The bill's companion, SF227, is sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park). It awaits action by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

— E. SCHMIDTKE

Discount for mature drivers clarified

Depending on their insurance policy, mature drivers may be eligible for a 10 percent premium discount if they take an eight-hour defensive driving course to help update their skills. However, a participant who loses the discount because they didn't take a four-hour refresher course every three years may find they need to retake the eight-hour course again.

HF2441, approved by the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee Feb. 28, would clarify state statute so that a person 58 years and older who successfully completes a retaking of the original course or a refresher course more than three years from the date the person last was eligible for the premium reduction is entitled to reinstatement.

Sponsored by Rep. Jenifer Loon (R-Eden Prairie) the bill awaits action by the full House.

The companion, SF1542, sponsored by Sen. Paul Gazelka (R-Brainerd), awaits action by the full Senate.

— L. SCHUTZ

Education

Pooling resources program proposed

A proposed pilot program would allow districts to pool resources, with increased student achievement in mind.

Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton) and Sen. Al DeKruif (R-Madison Lake) sponsor HF755/SF946*, which would establish a five-year pilot project managed by the Education Department. Groups of schools would apply for the program, with three to six selected to participate. The department would then monitor the project for successful results and recommend whether it should be continued.

The House Education Finance Committee

laid the bill over Feb. 23 for possible improvements. It was passed 36-25 by the full Senate last year.

Erickson explained that this bill would give teachers an opportunity to try innovative ideas in the classroom.

"It is an opportunity to allow school districts to absolutely raise achievement and improve learning," she said.

Rep. Tom Anzelc (DFL-Balsam Township) said the bill is redundant, citing current statute that already allows for cross-school collaboration. He claimed that some districts, especially in Greater Minnesota, are already innovating on a cooperative level.

"I think they'd say, you know, we pretty much can do this now. ... I hope we don't throw up any barriers," Anzelc said.

Erickson maintained the need for this bill, saying that previous education legislation is too restrictive and has produced a chilling effect in schools.

"(Educators) have signaled to me that, because we are such controllers of what they do, we need to give them a professional directive that they can," Erickson said.

Kevin McHenry, government relations director for the department, said smaller districts would have a difficult time meeting the application deadline. McHenry said that larger districts have more resources, which gives them an advantage in applying for the program. Erickson refuted this claim.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) praised the bill, saying it addresses issues that face schools throughout Minnesota in a measurable way.

"It's clearly a strong message from us, encouraging relationships and expanding opportunities in our state," Mariani said.

— E. SCHMIDTKE

Dayton signs conference bill

Signed
by
the
governor

High schools will now be able to more quickly get help from the Minnesota State High School League in arranging conference membership.

Previously, if a high school needed to join a conference, it had to spend 180 days on its own as part of a "good faith" effort to become part of one before the league stepped in to assist it. The new law, signed March 1 by Gov. Mark Dayton, and is effective the next day, reduces the wait to 90 days.

Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck) and Sen. Joe Gimse (R-Willmar) are the sponsors.

HF1585*/SF1322/CH125

— E. SCHMIDTKE

Private school choice options

Low-income students in poorly performing schools could have increased access to private school education.

HF273, sponsored by Rep. Kelby Woodard (R-Belle Plaine), proposes that these students could leave failing public schools to attend more effective private schools, with the state picking up the bill. On Feb. 29, members of the House Education Finance Committee debated whether this strategy would really help Minnesota kids.

Private school choice programs offer struggling families options, said Patrick Wolf, professor at the University of Arkansas. He described a study he conducted that showed positive results from similar choice programs in Milwaukee. Wolf cited outcomes including higher graduation rates and academic growth.

"Parents love them. And they deliver education more efficiently and tend to enhance, not undermine, the public purposes of education," Wolf said.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) disagreed. He referred to a 2005 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel investigation that detailed poor management and even criminal activity in private schools that received state funding in Wisconsin. He worries similar malfeasance could occur with the aid of Minnesota public money. Davnie also questioned Wolf's analysis of data, saying that the study results instead showed private schools in choice programs to be less effective than public schools.

Rep. Linda Slocum (DFL-Richfield) also voiced concern about the bill, explaining that private school teachers in Minnesota do not need to have licenses to instruct students. She said extending public money to unlicensed teachers is counter to a number of recently enacted education bills, which emphasized teacher accountability and knowledge.

Rep. Branden Petersen (R-Andover) expressed frustration with members' hesitancy to support the bill.

"For the life of me, I cannot understand exactly what the problem is with letting the least fortunate among us make decisions about their kids' education. Maybe I'm too simple of a guy," Petersen said.

The bill was laid over for more work. Sen. Sean Nienow (R-Cambridge) sponsors the companion, SF388, which awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

— E. SCHMIDTKE

Arts money for schools?

A bill that would require 40 percent of Legacy Fund money to be spent for school arts encountered turbulence Feb. 28, when some members of the House Legacy Funding Division questioned whether the bill interfered with the mission of the Legacy Act.

Sponsored by Rep. Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington), HF2433 would dedicate at least 40 percent of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund to arts-related programs in public and non-public schools. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

"My opinion on this is that children come first," Garofalo said. He faced questions from several members about how his bill fits with the constitutional amendment that funds arts, arts education and access to preserve the state's history and cultural heritage.

"What you're trying to do is take General Fund reductions and make it up with legacy funding," Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) said.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said the bill represents the latest effort to funnel constitutionally dedicated funds for other purposes.

Garofalo defended the bill as an attempt to allocate money to students on a per-pupil basis and let school districts decide how best to use the money to promote arts.

When Wagenius asked whether he would spend money from the state's General Fund to pay for arts, Garofalo replied he would only if Wagenius agreed to an equal amount of spending reductions to make up for the arts expenditures.

The bill has no Senate companion.

— B. GEIGER

School start compromise proposed

With Minnesota's short summer, there's a continual debate over school start dates — school officials want local control over school calendars, while resort owners and the agricultural sector say starting school before Labor Day would impact their businesses.

Rep. Connie Doepke (R-Orono) hopes her bill, HF2325, is a compromise.

The Flexible Learning Year bill would allow school districts to begin school before Labor Day, but would prohibit school from being held on the Thursday and Friday before Labor Day.

"It is all about giving locally elected school boards the ability to adopt a school calendar that best meets the needs of their community, while recognizing the need for an extended

holiday at the end of the summer," Doepke told the House Education Reform Committee Feb. 28. The committee approved the bill and moved it to the House floor.

Two unlikely allies have joined in their support of the bill — Education Minnesota, which represents most of the state's teachers, and the Minnesota Business Partnership. However, resort owners have been successful in keeping Minnesota as one of five states that don't start before Labor Day.

"We've been at this issue for a long, long time. We've tried compromise; we've been through four governors, four presidents and here we go again," said Joel Carlson, who represents the Congress of Minnesota Resort Owners.

He said the argument that pre-Labor Day starts improve school performance and test scores has not been proven.

Among DFLers supporting the bill is Rep. Kim Norton (DFL-Rochester), who sponsored a similar measure in the past. "I'm a little surprised that you don't think that the summer gap can make a difference. I think there is plenty of data that it can impact student scores. I hope we continue to do what is best for the students."

Rep. Mark Murdock (R-Ottertail) lives and owns a business in "Lake Country." He can't support the bill, he said, because of how it would negatively impact the Main Street businesses in his area.

The companion, SF1892, sponsored by Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

Transitioning from high school to work

By the ninth grade, all young people should be making plans for what they'll do after graduating from high school.

"It is projected that 70 percent of the jobs will require some form of post-secondary education ... students need to know their options, and without a plan it is hard to know what is next," said Bryan Lindsley, executive director of the Governor's Workforce Development Council, during the Feb. 28 House Education Reform Committee.

Rep. Carol McFarlane (R-White Bear Lake) and Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester) sponsor HF1272/SF1073*, which encourages school districts to seek funding and develop a plan for helping students make a successful transition to post-secondary education and employment. The committee approved the bill and it now awaits action on the House floor. The Senate passed the bill 48-12 on Feb. 20.

The measure comes from the council established to "forge practical solutions to Minnesota's workforce challenges." It is part of its All Hands on Deck report recently submitted to the governor.

McFarlane emphasized this is a recommendation and not a mandate. Rep. Tom Tilberry (DFL-Fridley) is concerned that with tight school budgets, rural schools would have a hard time implementing a program that may need more school counselors.

The bill, however, has bipartisan support.

"I really think it is necessary, and most schools are trying to accommodate what is in the bill," said Rep. Sandra Peterson (DFL-New Hope). "Many of our students graduate with no idea of what courses they need. It is a whole different world today, and the jobs are very different. ... It is just time we do this."

— L. SCHUTZ

Elections

Voter ID alternative gets hearing

A plan to institute a photo ID requirement for voters remains controversial among lawmakers, but members of a House committee got their first glimpse at a possible bipartisan alternative Feb. 28.

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie appeared before the House State Government Finance Committee to demonstrate the use of electronic poll books. The technology consists of laptop computers containing updated voter registration data and photos provided by Driver and Vehicle Services. Proponents say providing electronic poll books for polling places would allow for the verification of voters' identities without subjecting them to a photo ID requirement.

"It allows us to accomplish the very important task of bringing visual verification of voters into the polling place," Ritchie said. He added, "It's something that can be done very easily and relatively quickly."

Supporters say electronic poll books represent a less burdensome alternative to the photo ID law proposed by Republican lawmakers. Instead of requiring all voters to obtain a government-issued photo ID card with a current address on it, the electronic poll books would simply utilize the state's current voter registration system, but with the added benefit of being able to identify voters visually.

Some doubt the value of such a system,



PHOTO BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Secretary of State Mark Ritchie holds up a poll book during a Feb. 28 demonstration for the House State Government Finance Committee. Supporters say electronic poll books would allow for visual voter verification and simplify the check-in process during elections.

however. Rep. Keith Downey (R-Edina) asked what the point is of making photos available at the polling places if there's no photo ID requirement for voters.

"Under the premise of a photo ID requirement, I think this makes great sense. Absent photo ID, I can't imagine we'd be sticking people's photos on poll books," he said.

The committee took no action. There are currently no bills moving through the House that would implement electronic poll books. Rep. Mike Benson (R-Rochester) said there is "still a lot of work to be done" on how best to roll out such a system.

— N. BUSSE

Health & Human Services

Teen parent child care exemption

Teen parents who attend alternative programs to earn a high school diploma and are given child care assistance while in classes are exempt from a maximum 10-day absenteeism rule. However, legislation passed during the 2011 special session will eliminate the exemption beginning Jan. 1, 2013.

Under the new law, child care providers

would only be paid for up to 10 days that a child is absent from their care, excluding holidays. Deborah Bennett, child care director at the Anoka-Hennepin School District 11, said all of the children in the district's alternative program missed more than 10 days last year. Several reasons were cited, such as transportation problems, court hearings, personal illness, social service appointments and preschool visitations.

HF2331, sponsored by Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood), would give counties the option to allow teen parents to exceed the 10-day absence limit. Proponents said rescinding the law would help avoid unintended consequences, where the parent might bring a sick child to day care to avoid going over the limit or leave the child in an unsafe situation.

The House Health and Human Services Finance Committee laid the bill over Feb. 29 for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. A Senate companion, SF2157, is sponsored by Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont).

— S. HEGARTY

Adult group home reforms proposed

The Association of Residential Resources in Minnesota, an association of 150 providers

supporting people with disabilities, is suggesting several legislative changes to the adult foster care program and services for persons with disabilities.

ARRM's recommendations are part of its "Blueprint for Reform" and can be found in HF1979, sponsored by Rep. Joe Schomacker (R-Luverne). The House Health and Human Services Reform Committee approved the bill as amended Feb. 29 and referred it to the House Government Operations and Elections Committee.

Provisions include:

- developing an optional certification for adult foster care homes that serve persons with mental illness;
- establishing a task force to review and make recommendations on pilot projects for home and community-based services for people with disabilities; and
- allowing foster care homes to care for clients temporarily in "respite care" when regular clients are away from the home for a period of time.

Julie Ring, policy analyst for the Association of Minnesota Counties, said the AMC supports the concept of a task force but would like to see more county representation, such as one metropolitan and one rural representative.

Alice Hulbert, the parent of an adult with disabilities who lives in a group home she owns and leases to a provider, opposed several of the proposed provisions. She said some of the reforms would loosen licensing regulations and may result in a lower quality of care.

Sen. Scott Nienow (R-Cambridge) sponsors SF1699, a companion bill that awaits action by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

Higher Education

HEAPR should be priority

Although the amount of capital investment allocations are unknown, the House Higher Education Policy and Finance Committee recommended Feb. 28 that the bulk of bonding dollars the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the University of Minnesota do receive should go toward asset preservation and replacement.

Officials from MnSCU and the university emphasized higher education asset preservation and replacement projects

in capital budget requests made before the committee in late January and early February. MnSCU's \$278.7 million capital investment request includes \$110 million for HEAPR, or 39.5 percent of its total. The university's HEAPR request of \$90 million represents 43 percent of its \$209.1 million capital investment request.

In his bonding proposal, Gov. Mark Dayton recommended \$20 million in HEAPR for both the university and MnSCU, a number that Committee Chairman Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls) deemed "insufficient" saying they should be funded "at the highest amount possible."

According to the committee, any extra money designated for higher education should then go toward project priorities that have been established by MnSCU and the university.

— B. GEIGER

Hockey money could aid elsewhere

Some members of a House committee objected to a plan to use leftover bond money from a hockey center renovation to fund new capital projects at St. Cloud State University.

Sponsored by Rep. King Banaian (R-St. Cloud), HF1960 would authorize \$4.8 million in 2008 state bond appropriations intended for the National Hockey Center on the campus to be instead spent on asset preservation and repair projects.

The House Higher Education Policy and Finance Committee approved the bill Feb. 23 and forwarded it to the House Capital Investment Committee. A Senate companion, SF1574, sponsored by Sen. John Pederson (R-St. Cloud), awaits action by the Senate Capital Investment Committee.

Some members questioned the proposed financing structure.

"With MnDOT, if a project comes in under budget they don't get to build another road," said Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter).

Rep. Jeanne Poppe (DFL-Austin) questioned whether using bonds originally granted for the hockey center for unrelated projects opens the door for similar financial approaches by other colleges or universities.

"It is a change in how we would use these funds," said Steve Ludwig, St. Cloud State vice president for administrative affairs.

— B. GEIGER

Local Government

Haulers could sue over lost customers

Trash haulers could be given legal recourse against cities that take away their customers.

Rep. Kirk Stensrud (R-Eden Prairie) sponsors HF2084 that would apply in situations where municipalities either limit the number of waste haulers who can serve their residents or start collecting the waste themselves. Companies forced to surrender their customers could seek compensation for their lost business, under the proposal.

"This bill will protect the small-business owner and entrepreneur who provides waste services to our communities throughout the state," Stensrud said.

The House Government Operations and Elections Committee approved the bill Feb. 28 and referred it to the House Civil Law Committee. Sen. Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen) sponsors the companion, SF1664, which awaits action by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

Willie Tennis, owner of Tennis Sanitation, said the City of Maplewood took away 20 percent of his business when it decided to mandate a single trash-hauling company for the entire city. He said his customers opposed the change and were satisfied with the services he provided.

"We didn't do anything wrong," Tennis said, adding that he faces the prospect of laying off workers for the first time.

Opponents say the issue is complicated by the fact that local governments are required by law to ensure waste collection services are provided to their constituents.

White Bear Lake City Manager Mark Sather said municipal waste contracts benefit haulers by guaranteeing them business. He said cities need to be able to organize waste hauling services in ways that promote efficiency and maximize benefits for the customers.

Trudy Richter, representing the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board, said the ability to sue cities for organizing waste collection would "hold taxpayers hostage" by discouraging cities from managing waste services more effectively.

"It's a very slippery slope," she said.

— N. BUSSE

City seeks to avoid bankruptcy

The northern community of Tamarack has a population of less than 100. It could be facing bankruptcy if the state doesn't

step in to provide a little financial cushion.

Their problems stem from a sewer system the city installed in the 1990s.

"They acted on advice that should have been reliable ... and installed a system that was too big for their needs," by a contractor that did shoddy work, Rep. Carolyn McElfattrick (R-Deer River) told the House Property and Local Tax Division Feb. 29. It turned out the monthly charge to those hooked up to the service is greater than expected.

City officials were able to pay off the construction loans, and had to raise fees in 2007 to pay operational expenses. "With a quarter of the town's hookups delinquent on their fees, the operational costs are consuming all the city finances," McElfattrick said. The town could be facing bankruptcy by the end of the year.

She sponsors HF2283 that would provide an additional \$12,000 in local government aid in 2013 to provide a "respite" for the town as it figures out how to pay the costs and plan for a replacement system more adequately sized to the town's needs. The bill was approved and moved to the House Taxes Committee.

Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) questioned the wisdom of the state stepping in to help solve a problem of a system built with federal funds.

"The town can't afford to maintain the system," he said. "For you to come here and ask for us to maintain a system that doesn't work, that was paid for by the tax dollars and there is absolutely no plan for the next 20 years for what kind of system to put in, much less how to pay for it, begs a question ... but I won't ask it."

The companion, SF2077, sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee.

— L. SCHUTZ

Military & Vet. Affairs

Burial rights for Hmong, Lao vets

About 400 allied veterans from the "American Secret War" in Laos during the 1950s, who currently live in Minnesota, would be eligible for burial in the Minnesota Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls, under a bill approved by a House division Feb. 27.

HF2261 would expand burial rights to

Highlights continued on page 12

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The disappearing budget surplus

Unpaid debts to schools mean the state's \$323 million surplus is fleeting

By Nick Busse

Minnesota's economy is improving and the state budget has begun its slow climb toward solvency.

That's the gist of this year's February Economic Forecast, which predicts a \$323 million surplus for the rest of the current two-year budget cycle. But despite the good news, top budget officials warned that the state still has a stack of IOUs it needs to pay.

"That anticipated \$323 million balance does not stick around long," Minnesota Management & Budget Commissioner Jim Schowalter said Feb. 29.

Last December, MMB announced a projected \$876 million surplus — the first in nearly five years. That money was used to shore up the state's cash flow account and

mostly go to pay back K-12 school districts, which the state borrowed from during the course of the last several budget cycles. It's not a matter of choice; current law requires the K-12 buyback before any new spending can take place. In effect, this zeroes out not only the current surplus but any future ones until the full \$2.7 billion is paid back.

"It's going to be a while before we have a positive forecast balance, even if we have good news," Schowalter said.

Still, overall the forecast seems to point toward better days for Minnesota. State Economist Tom Stinson said unemployment is falling, wages are growing, consumer confidence is up and the risk of another recession has dropped.

"Generally, things look good. The economy appears to be strengthening," he said.

Barring certain global events such as an oil crisis triggered by Iran or a messy end to Europe's sovereign debt crisis, Stinson said he expects several years of steady economic

growth. He noted that Minnesota's unemployment rate is significantly lower than the national average.

"At this point, the economy appears to be

positioned for growth in 2012," Stinson said.

That's not to say the state is out of the woods yet. A \$1.1 billion budget shortfall is projected for the next fiscal biennium — a figure that rises to nearly \$2.2 billion once inflation is factored in. And that's not counting the \$2.4 billion that will still be owed to the schools.

Perhaps owing in part to these mixed messages, Republicans and DFLers had very different reactions to the forecast.

House Speaker Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove) called the projected surplus "very good news," and credited Republicans' hawkish fiscal policies with balancing the budget and restoring confidence to the private sector.

"This is good fiscal management by the House and Senate Republican caucuses," Zellers said.

House Minority Leader Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) chided the Republicans for "giddiness" over a forecast that shows a long-term structural deficit awaiting the next Legislature.

"Had we balanced the budget in a responsible way ... without borrowing billions from our schools, I would argue Minnesota would be a lot better off," Thissen said.

For his part, Gov. Mark Dayton said the forecast shows mainly that the state's economy is in recovery mode. He said neither he nor the Legislature deserves any credit for the improved forecast, and emphasized that there's still more work to be done.

"We're still however a long ways from getting out of our financial hole," Dayton said.

Surplus or no surplus, the lack of a projected budget deficit this year means lawmakers won't have to duke it out in another protracted budget battle with the governor. Zellers and Senate Majority Leader David Senjem (R-Rochester) reaffirmed their commitment to end session early this year, most likely sometime in April.

"The earlier, the better," Senjem said. 🐼



PHOTO BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Minnesota Management & Budget Commissioner Jim Schowalter explains the February Economic Forecast at a Capitol briefing Feb. 29. State Economist Tom Stinson and State Budget Director Margaret Kelly listen in the background.

budget reserves, both of which had been severely drained during several years of tight budgets.

Schowalter said the new surplus will



PHOTO BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Col. Chuechou Tchang, national chairman of Special Guerrilla Units veterans, testifies Feb. 27 on a bill that would ask Congress and the U.S. President to amend federal veterans cemetery laws to expand eligibility to include allied Hmong-American and Lao-American veterans of America's secret war in Laos for burial in state veterans cemeteries.

include deceased Hmong-Americans and Lao-American veterans, many of whom were recruited in their homeland and trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War. After the war, many of the soldiers were relocated to the United States.

However, federal law does not currently grant former Hmong and Lao CIA operatives' burial rights in state and national cemeteries so the bill is contingent upon HF2260, a state resolution requesting that federal laws be changed.

The House Veterans Services Division approved both bills, sponsored by Rep. Bob Dettmer (R-Forest Lake). The division referred the resolution to the House floor and referred HF2261 to the House State Government Finance Committee. Neither bill has a Senate companion.

Speaking through an interpreter, retired Col. Chuechou Tchang said they were trained to fight alongside American soldiers and were told to retrieve U.S. casualties at all costs. "We paid the price to be here. Allow us

to rest in honor with our deceased brothers."

Between 1975 and 1982, more than 53,000 Hmong and Laotian refugees resettled in the United States and many gained U.S. citizenship. An estimated 8,000 veterans remain in the U.S. and are now between 70 and 85 years of age.

Mike McElhiney, legislative director for the Department of Veterans Affairs, said that while the department appreciates the sacrifices made by the American-Hmong and American-Lao veterans, the proposed legislation may open the door to other groups from subsequent wars and conflicts to receive similar state and federal benefits.

"We don't want to set a precedent where we single out just one population," McElhiney said. The department remains neutral on the issue, he added.

The bill would also permit burial in any future state veteran cemeteries, such as the one planned in Fillmore County.

— S. HEGARTY

Help with hiring a veteran

A private employer would be allowed to give veterans preference in hiring and promotion practices under a bill approved by the House Veterans Services Division Feb. 27.

HF2100 would make the veterans preference voluntary for private employers, who could also extend the benefit to the spouse of a disabled or deceased veteran. Some publicly funded agencies currently are allowed to give veterans hiring preference.

Although the federal Civil Rights Act considers voluntary veterans preference in employment as discriminatory, it is permitted if allowed under state or local laws. Therefore, granting preference in hiring and promotion under these circumstances would not violate state or local equal employment opportunity law, according to the provision.

Rep. John Kriesel (R-Cottage Grove) sponsors the bill, which was referred to the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Sen. Ted Daley (R-Eagan) sponsors a companion, SF1599, that awaits action on the Senate floor.

— S. HEGARTY

Public Safety

County attorneys with guns bill

State statute prohibits local government employees, other than licensed peace officers, from carrying firearms. A few more people could be added to that list.

Passed 116-15 by the House Feb. 29, HF1829 would allow a county attorney or assistant county attorney to carry a firearm on duty provided they have a state-issued permit to carry. A county attorney could still restrict an assistant county attorney from carrying while on duty.

Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center), the bill's sponsor, emphasized it was not a "knee-jerk reaction" the Dec. 15 Grand Marais incident in which Cook County Attorney Tim Scannell was allegedly shot by Daniel Schlienzy after the latter was convicted of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, and that it had been brought to him a week before the shooting. However, the incident brought attention to the measure.

"Not all county attorneys, maybe not even the majority, will exercise this privilege under this legislation," Cornish said. He added that there are "a lot of judges that are packing heat



PHOTO BY PAUL BATTAGLIA

Rep. Tony Cornish explains a Senate amendment to HF1467, a bill that would, in part, change state law governing the use of force in self defense. The House repassed the bill 85-47 Feb. 29.

under their robes and approve of this also for the county attorney.”

The bill would not supersede a judge’s right to ban firearms from their courtroom or courtroom complex.

“The concern about security in county courthouses throughout the state remains a very serious problem, particularly the inconsistency,” said Rep. Sheldon Johnson (DFL-St. Paul). “This bill in no way deals or addresses that issue in any kind of manner. It’s an issue we’re going to have to keep paying attention to.”

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria) is the sponsor.

— M. Cook

Prosecutor assault penalty

Prosecutors filing a complaint do so on behalf of the state. They are also the ones who must stand up in court and proclaim that a defendant is guilty of a crime and then prove so beyond reasonable doubt.

Doing their job sometimes gets them viewed as the cause of all the defendant’s problems, and retribution could occur.

Added protection from the state could be forthcoming.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center), HF1879 was passed 130-1 by the House Feb. 29. It now awaits action by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

Sen. Dave Thompson (R-Lakeville) is the Senate sponsor.

The bill would add enhanced penalties for causing the death of or assaulting a prosecutor while that person is engaged in their official duties. It would also add “prosecuting attorney” to the a list of protected occupations — which now includes a peace officer and jail or prison guard — under the first-degree murder or assault and fourth-degree-assault statutes.

“It’s important from a societal standpoint to make it clear ... that the laws of

this state will be enforced, and if you shoot the embodiment of those who we expect to enforce these laws there will be an added penalty and you will be held accountable for that added assault or added crime against the state,” Rice County Attorney Paul Beaumaster told a House committee in January. Beaumaster is president of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association.

Rep. Tina Liebling (DFL-Rochester) voted for the bill, but expressed concern that other lawyers or court personnel are not included in the bill.

“Sometimes you get people who are there as victims and may be angry at a defense lawyer or who are there on a civil case who may be angry at a lawyer that’s not a prosecuting attorney,” she said.

— M. Cook

Gun law expansion goes to governor

At what point should a person be permitted to use lethal force in self defense or to protect their properties?

That is the primary question in a gun debate that ended with the House repassing HF1467 85-47 Feb. 29.

The House passed the bill 79-50 last session, but it was amended before being passed 40-23 by the Senate Feb. 23. It now awaits action by Gov. Mark Dayton, who has threatened to veto the bill, but met with Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center) Tuesday to discuss the proposal. Cornish and Sen. Gretchen Hoffman (R-Vergas) are the bill sponsors.

The bill would, in part, change state law governing the use of force in self defense, including that an individual using deadly force is presumed to possess a reasonable belief that there exists an imminent threat of substantial or great bodily harm or death. As amended by the Senate, gun owners are not entitled to the presumption if the person fired on is believed to be a law enforcement officer.

Proponents say the bill better lets law-abiding citizens defend their property and stand their ground. Opponents argue that the bill would essentially allow a person to shoot first and ask questions later.

“I think this bill is wrong; I think it’s reckless; I think we should renounce it; I think we should reject it,” said Rep. Michael Paymar (DFL-St. Paul), who noted that most law enforcement leaders have spoken against the bill, and noted that people already have the right to use deadly force in some cases.

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) cited three unintentional shootings in Minneapolis as evidence the bill could produce more, such as those that could kill or injure children.

“Zero of the stories you heard on the floor have anything to do with the Castle Doctrine and its application,” Cornish responded.

The bill also defines and delimits the authority of peace officers to disarm law abiding individuals during a state of disaster declared by the governor, and requires Minnesota to recognize a permit-to-carry issued by any other state, provided that the permit holder conforms to Minnesota’s pistol carry laws while carrying a pistol within Minnesota.

— M. Cook

No-contact order clarification

A bill receiving committee approval aims to clear up some confusion about domestic abuse no contact orders. These orders were created by a 2000 law.

“Domestic abuse no contact orders is a criminal order,” said Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Red Wing), who sponsors HF2491. “We’re not changing that; we’re simply stating that in the definition so it relieves some of the

ambiguity in statute right now.”

The bill also aims to clarify that an order can be initiated at the same hearing as a pretrial release or sentencing proceeding.

Approved Feb. 28 by the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance Committee, the bill was sent to the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee. A companion, SF2134, sponsored by Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

Liz Richards, director of advocacy and systems change at the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, said a 2010 law made some statutory changes including the moving of domestic abuse no contact orders from one section of family law into the criminal statute.

Since then there has been much confusion and concern about the statute, including the process set forth, she said. “These changes deal with the procedural questions.”

— M. COOK

Notification loophole closed

Signed
by
the
governor

Residents near where a pedophile will soon be living must now be notified by law enforcement about his or her discharge into their community, closing what some said was a loophole in the notification law.

The law is in response to the court-ordered discharge of Clarence Opheim, the state’s first sex offender discharged from the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in St. Peter. Following nearly 20 years in the treatment program, Opheim is due to be transferred to a halfway house, where he will be required to meet 32 rules of his discharge. Previously, community notification was not required unless the person was being released from the halfway house.

Sponsored by Rep. Kathy Lohmer (R-Lake Elmo) and Sen. Julianne Ortman (R-Chanhassen), the law is effective Feb. 24, 2012.

HF2394*/SF1994/CH123

— S. HEGARTY

Omnibus corrections bill OK’d

Victims who would like to be informed when their offender is released from prison or a secure hospital could be notified electronically.

This is one of four provisions in an omnibus Department of Corrections bill approved Feb. 28 by the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and

Finance Committee. Sponsored by Rep. Tony Cornish (R-Vernon Center), HF2415 awaits action by the House Ways and Means Committee.

“The most powerful healing tool for a victim is information,” said Lydia Newlin, victim assistance program manager for the Corrections Department. “This just clarifies ... kind of gets us modernized into where we’re at today with allowing victims to request notification.”

Newlin said most victim notification is an opt-in procedure, and current law requires that to be done by writing a request to the corrections commissioner. A federal grant has helped the department develop a new electronic system called Minnesota Choice, which, in part, provides victims a choice in how they want to be notified.

Also in the omnibus bill is:

- HF1938, sponsored by Cornish, which would allow the Department of Corrections’ Fugitive Apprehension Unit to apply for a search warrant;
- HF1958, sponsored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center), which would bar offenders convicted of murder, manslaughter, criminal sexual conduct, assault, drive-by shooting, assault, robbery, arson and other specified crimes from participating in the Challenge Incarceration Program; and
- HF1959, sponsored by Hilstrom, which would eliminate an annual performance report from the Department of Corrections, instead reverting back to a biennial report. This is expected to save the department approximately \$8,000.

A companion to HF2415, SF2084, sponsored by Sen. Warren Limmer (R-Maple Grove), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— M. COOK

State Government

E-Verify for state workers

A federal system that checks whether employees are eligible to work in the United States might be checking all new state employees.

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Mazeppa) sponsors HF1976 that would require new hires in all three branches of state government to submit to a check through the E-Verify system, which is run by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The House State Government Finance Committee approved the bill Feb. 23 and sent it to the House floor. Sen. Al DeKruif (R-Madison Lake) sponsors the companion, SF1842, which awaits action by the Senate State Government Innovation and Veterans Committee.

E-Verify cross-checks data from federal agencies to determine whether someone is a U.S. citizen or is otherwise authorized to work legally in the country. Supporters say it’s a useful tool that provides instantaneous verification, but opponents question the system’s reliability.

“This is a system with errors,” said Carolyn Jackson, lobbying coordinator for the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota.

Jackson cited a 2010 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office that found E-Verify is vulnerable to identity theft and information fraud. She said the U.S. Social Security Administration found 17.8 million records with discrepancies related to information used by E-Verify.

Drazkowski acknowledged that the system has had problems in the past, but said studies show that “this technology has been improving over time.” He said only 0.3 percent of people deemed ineligible by E-Verify are later confirmed to be work-authorized.

Benjamin Gerber, a policy manager with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber opposes the bill because it prefers a federal solution to immigration issues as opposed to a piecemeal state-by-state approach.

— N. BUSSE

Outsourcing restrictions eased

State agencies would have an easier time outsourcing state jobs, under a bill that won committee approval.

Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Mazeppa) sponsors HF1975 that would remove a number of statutory restrictions on outsourcing. It would allow, but not require, state agencies to enter into service contracts regardless of whether state employees are able and available to perform the work.

The House State Government Finance Committee approved the bill Feb. 28. It now moves to the House Ways and Means Committee. A companion, SF2090, sponsored by Sen. Dave Thompson (R-Lakeville), awaits action by the Senate State Government Innovation and Veterans Committee.

THUMBS UP TO MINNESOTA



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Dean Urdahl, foreground, introduces 2011 Miss Minnesota Natalie Davis from Dassel during the Feb. 23 House floor session.

Drazkowski said the bill would simply “untie the hands” of Gov. Mark Dayton and his commissioners and allow them to carry out state functions using a mix of public and private employees as they see fit. Opponents see potential risks, however.

Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) said outsourcing could make the state dependent on contractors for work that might be better performed internally.

“Once the functions are gone, it’s almost impossible or extremely expensive to rebuild it and bring it back in-house again,” he said.

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) objected to a provision that would remove a legal requirement that agencies consider rehiring laid off state workers before entering into contracts with private vendors.

“I don’t think it’s too much to ask that we at least give them a crack at doing the job that they once did,” Simon said.

Curt Yoakum, legislative director for the Department of Administration, said the department is concerned the bill could undermine the state’s own internal efforts to boost efficiency and productivity. He said reforms initiated last year have already resulted in several million dollars’ worth of savings.

“The department’s own efforts at reform ... depend largely on the trust and engagement of state employees,” Yoakum said.

The bill was laid over at the request of Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls), who said she plans to offer an amendment that would ban

legislators from benefitting personally from state contracts.

— N. BUSSE

Minnesota Youth Council established

A council of teenagers could soon be advising the Legislature on issues affecting Minnesota youth.

Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth) sponsors HF1708 that would establish a Minnesota Youth Council. The House Government Operations and Elections Committee approved the bill Feb. 23 and sent it to the House floor.

The council currently exists under the auspices of the Minnesota Alliance With Youth, a nonprofit group. Supporters say establishing the council in state law would create a meaningful link between young people and legislators, giving youth a “direct voice” under the Capitol dome.

“This would legitimize, formalize and kind of institutionalize youth input into the legislative process,” Marquart said.

Thirty-six members between the ages of 13 and 19 would be appointed to the council to serve two-year terms. Within the council, an advisory committee would be established to work with lawmakers on youth-related legislation. The House and Senate would each appoint one Republican and one DFL legislative liaison to work with the committee.

Sarah Dixon, the alliance’s president and CEO, said any costs associated with the

council would be supported completely by her organization.

“The Minnesota Alliance With Youth believes strongly that young people need to be at the table; we also believe that the state of Minnesota needs young people at the table,” Dixon said.

Esther Lee, Chaska High School senior, said it’s important for youth to not be overlooked by policymakers.

“The state-sponsored effort will make it possible for the effective and powerful youth voice to be heard across the state of Minnesota and also this nation as well,” she said.

Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon) sponsors the companion, SF1435, which awaits action by the Senate State Government Innovation and Veterans Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Transportation

Restored pioneer vehicles clarified

Automobile restorers can easily invest tens of thousands of dollars restoring vehicles dating back to the Great Depression and before. They want the title to reflect the accuracy of their work.

Sponsored by Rep. Mike Benson (R-Rochester), HF2239 would, in part, change the title application and type issued for the vehicle. Approved Feb. 27 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee, the amended bill awaits action on the House floor. A companion, SF2202 sponsored by Sen. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

What happens now, Benson said, is when an owner seeks a new title they receive one saying the car is a reconstructed vehicle, it will have a Vehicle Identification Number that doesn’t correspond to numbers previously on the vehicle and the year on the title will be the year the vehicle was restored, not its manufactured year.

“The bill’s intent is to correct that and create a titling process that allows for cars that are manufactured from 1935 or before to have a pioneer plate and a title that says restored, rather than reconstructed, and has the proper numbers that are already stamped on the block,” Benson said.

Vicki Albu, vehicle services program director with the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Public Safety Department,

said the answer is complex because the vehicle must be described accurately, in part, for insurance purposes. "The problem comes when either the body or the frame or some major component part of the vehicle is not from the same model year and make of the vehicle. What do you call it? ... These are handled on a case-by-case basis."

"No collector in this business is going to cheat by putting the wrong motor in a car," said Gary Hoonsbeen, who has been restoring vehicles since the 1940s. He said three people he knows of have received notification letters saying they did not restore, but rather reconstructed the vehicle and could only receive a collector's plate.

"We want the name of the original manufacturer of the car clearly on the title; we want to retain the vehicle's original identification number ... and we want to recognize on our titles the year that the car was originally manufactured," Hoonsbeen said. "We feel these are historical vehicles, not just collectors, and the reason we have pioneer plates is to recognize that place in history."

— M. Cook

Freight rail economic study sought

Railroads can be the economic driver for rural communities. But there may be more that can be done to or for these railroads to make these small towns across the state more viable.

Sponsored by Rep. Mike Beard (R-Shakopee), HF2428 would direct the Transportation and Employment and Economic Development departments to conduct a study about the economic impacts of freight rail and ways to maximize economic development. Results would be due the Legislature by Jan. 15, 2013.

The bill was held over Feb. 29 by the House Transportation Policy and Finance Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion. A companion, SF1960, sponsored by Sen. Joe Gimse (R-Willmar), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

"We have over 20 railroads in this state that move over 235 million tons of freight each year. For many manufacturers they're a vital link to the customers around the country and around the world," Beard said. "I believe a study can help us identify some other opportunities, some things that are hazards that we may want to avoid in the future and help us create more jobs."

Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter) spoke

REGIONAL BALLPARK



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Supporters of a bill that would provide funding for a regional ballpark on the edge of downtown St. Paul cover one of the hearing room chairs with St. Paul Saints memorabilia during a Feb. 23 meeting of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. The proposed ballpark would be home for the minor league team.

about the benefits of the Minnesota Prairie Line Inc. in south-central Minnesota, including how it helped an ethanol plant triple its output because the end product could be shipped by train, rather than just truck, "This is exactly the kind of thing that we should be talking about," he said.

"Any way you can add to this economic

base on these short lines to maintain their integrity for the future is a good thing," said Bob Zelenka, executive director of the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association.

MnDOT would authorize funds from the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement program for the study.

— M. Cook

Skol Vikings!

New plan for 'People's Stadium' in downtown Minneapolis is unveiled

The Minnesota Vikings could one day be playing at a new site that is less than a football field away from their current field.

Gov. Mark Dayton, team representatives and political leaders unveiled a plan March 1 for a new \$975 million stadium to be built largely in the parking lot of the current Metrodome site.

Under the plan, \$427 million of the cost would be paid by the team, \$398 million by the the state and \$150 million by Minneapolis. The state's share would come from an expansion of charitable gambling to include electronic pull tabs, while the city portion would come from the redirecting of some convention center and hospitality taxes.

It is expected the team would need to play one year at TCF Bank Stadium at the

University of Minnesota during the new stadium construction.

"We are pleased that those representatives of the Vikings, the City of Minneapolis and the state have successfully completed their negotiations to build a new stadium at the Metrodome site. We will now be working to finalize language for a new bill that will implement the proposed agreement," Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead), the lead House negotiator, said in a statement.

The actual stadium bill is expected to be introduced on Monday with many committee hearings likely to follow.

Before any shovels go into the ground, approval will be needed from both the Legislature and the Minneapolis City Council, neither of which is guaranteed.

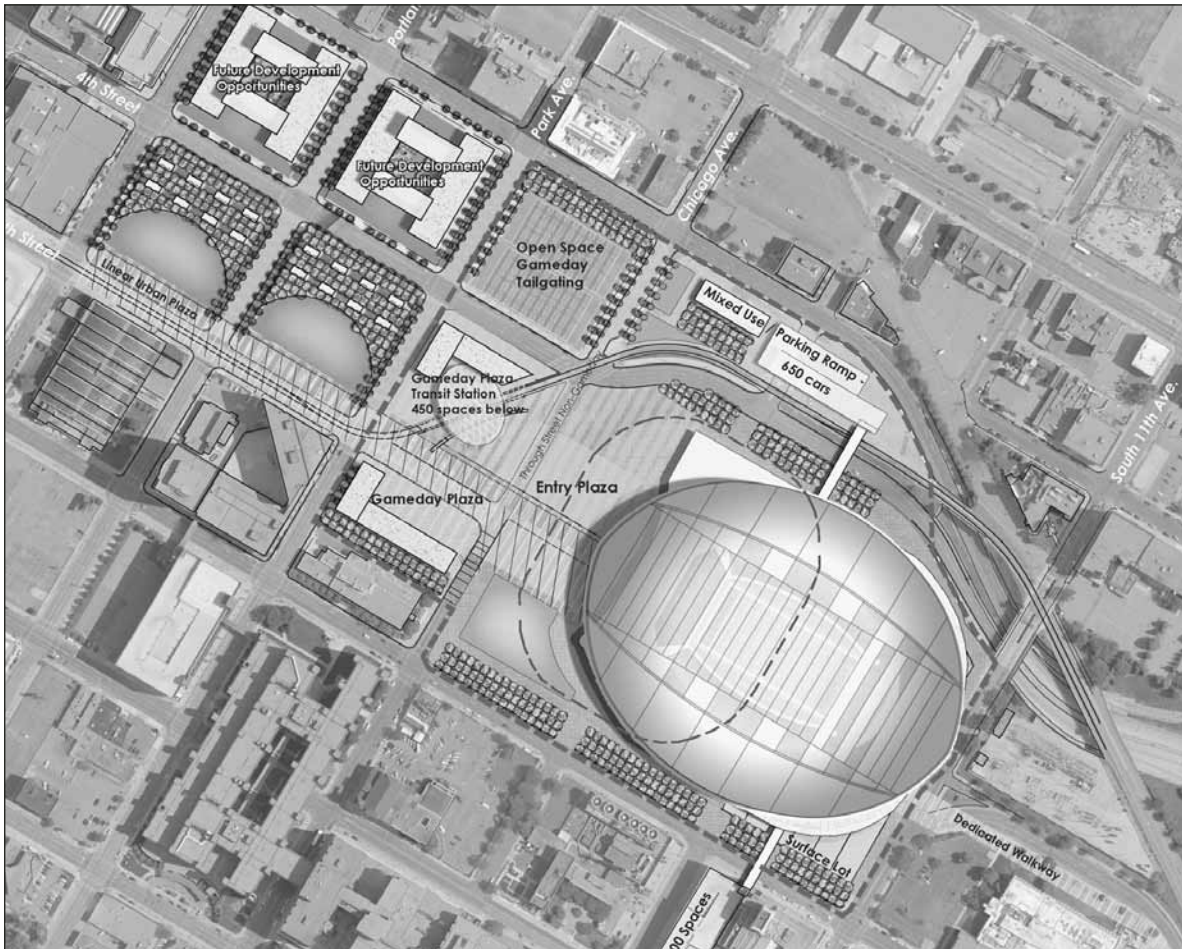
— M. Cook



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Morrie Lanning, the lead House negotiator, speaks at a March 1 press conference unveiling a new stadium plan for the Minnesota Vikings.

Proposed Minneapolis Vikings stadium site



Map courtesy of the Minnesota Vikings

Dashed line indicates the current footprint of the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.

Family calls him back home

Murdock leaves with better understanding of the district he has served

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

A lot can change in four years.

When Rep. Mark Murdock (R-Ottertail) ran for office in 2008, it took a family commitment to make it happen. Everyone helped with his campaign, and after he was elected, his son and daughter-in-law took over duties of running the family hardware store. But now, three grandchildren later, the younger Murdocks can use some grandparent help.

“Three-and-a-half years ago the family demands were there, but not like they are now,” said Murdock who announced he will not seek re-election. “Family comes first ... it always comes first.”

Murdock’s other son is starting a new business, and wants dad’s help. And then there is his 95-year-old mother in Owatonna with whom he would like to spend more time.

“It’s time for me to go home,” he said.

Located in the north central part of the

state, District 10B is a mix of lake country and farming interests with an aging population. Murdock said the people are easy to work with, and his duties as representative afforded him the chance to make some good friends. He will miss his day-to-day constituent contact — working to address their issues.

While the district is primarily Republican, Murdock said he represents people who affiliate themselves with the Independence and DFL parties. “There’s a difference between being a politician and a representative,” he said. He’d like to consider himself the latter.

Murdock remembers one of the first bills he championed — it had to do with the manufactured home industry — and it wasn’t to be the last on the subject with a district that is home to several manufactured home construction facilities. He became the “watch dog” for the manufactured home people, he said.

His goal this session is to get state help for Wadena to rebuild its community center, which was destroyed in a 2010 tornado. He sponsors HF1804, which would appropriate \$4.75 million for the project. The bill awaits action in the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. He serves on the House Education Reform Committee and would like to see some reform regarding teacher tenure. “I’m concerned about retaining good quality teachers.”

There have been times when Murdock has been frustrated with the gridlock he’s experienced in the Legislature. “But it’s how our system works. That’s the checks and balances,” he said. However, he complimented Gov. Mark Dayton for his willingness to reach out to Republicans.

The new District 10B will be a geographically large challenge for whoever takes over the House seat — and his advice to that person?

“Your constituents are the ones who send you here. They are your No. 1 priority,” he said. It means promptly responding to their e-mails or phone calls. “I try to respond within a day or two,” he said. “It’s all about your constituents and that they can trust the job you are doing down here.” He received some good “freshmen” advice from a colleague during his first term — to sit back, watch, listen and learn. “I took that advice. I speak when I have something to contribute. The more you learn, the more you know and your confidence grows. The main thing is to tell the truth. ... if you don’t know, don’t be afraid to say so.”

Murdock came to the House with a goal of reaching across party lines and he’s proud of his work, and the friends that he has made.

“It’s been a huge learning experience. It probably ranks right up there with coming out of high school and going into college. ... I love my district and the state of Minnesota, but it’s time to move on.” 🐕



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

During his time in the House, Rep. Mark Murdock became a self-described “watch dog” for the manufactured home industry, a business sector that employs many in his district.

Come to the Capitol

Directions, Parking, Visiting the Legislature, Tours, Dining

Directions

The State Capitol Complex is north of Interstate 94, just minutes from downtown St. Paul. It is accessible from the east and west on I-94, and from the north and south on Interstate 35E.

- I-94 eastbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn left. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-94 westbound: Exit at Marion Street. Turn right. Go to Aurora Avenue and turn right.
- I-35E northbound: Exit at Kellogg Boulevard. Turn left. Go to John Ireland Boulevard and turn right.
- I-35E southbound: Exit at University Avenue. Turn right. Go to Rice Street and turn left.

Parking

Public metered parking is available in Lot Q, north of the Capitol at Cedar Street and Sherburne Avenue; Lot AA, across Rice Street from the State Office Building on Aurora Avenue; Lot F, directly behind the Transportation Building; Lot H, west of the Veterans Service Building; Lot K, across from the Armory on Cedar Street (enter from 12th Street); Lot L, east of the Judicial Center; in the 14th Street Lot at the corner of North Robert Street and 14th Street; and on the orange level of the Centennial Office Building Ramp at Cedar Street and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. During the interim there are a few metered parking spots in front of the Capitol along Aurora Avenue.

Capitol Security personnel will issue tickets for expired meters.

All-day parking permits are available from Plant Management on the ground floor of the Administration Building at 50 Sherburne Ave., north of the Capitol, across University Avenue. Cash or checks are accepted. For more information, call 651-201-2300.

Outdoor disability parking is available in most public lots within the State Capitol Complex. However, most spots can be found in Lot N and Lot F. Disability parking is also available on the orange level of the Centennial Office Parking Ramp and in the 14th Street Lot.

The main disability entrance to the Capitol is on the northwest side of the building just off Lot N. There also are drop-off entrances on the south side under the front steps on the south side and on the northeast side of the building.

Visiting the Legislature

During session, all House and Senate floor sessions are open to the public. No pass is required for spectators to sit in the galleries of either chamber. The House usually meets at 3 p.m. Monday and Thursday, and the Senate generally meets at 11 a.m. Monday and Thursday during the first few weeks of session. As the session nears the end, however,

both bodies may meet several times a week, often into the night.

Visitors interested in observing these sessions may call House Public Information Services at 651-296-2146 or Senate Information at 651-296-0504 with questions.

Committee meetings are open to the public, as well. Visitors wanting to attend a committee meeting can access committee information through the Legislature's website at www.leg.mn. House meeting schedules are available by calling 651-296-9283.

If group members want to meet with their individual legislators or testify before a committee, arrangements should be made at least a week in advance.

For information on reserving a room for group conferences, call the State Office Building room scheduler at 651-296-0306 or the Capitol room scheduler at 651-296-0866.

Tours

Tours of the Capitol are offered through the Capitol Historic Site Program of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Tour guides lead the 45-minute tours on the hour Monday through Friday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.; Saturday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (last tour leaves at 2 p.m.); and Sunday between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. (last tour leaves at 3 p.m.). The tours begin at the Capitol information desk. Brochures in about 20 foreign languages also are available there.

Tour rates vary. Generally, tours of the Capitol are free of charge with a suggested donation of \$5 per person.

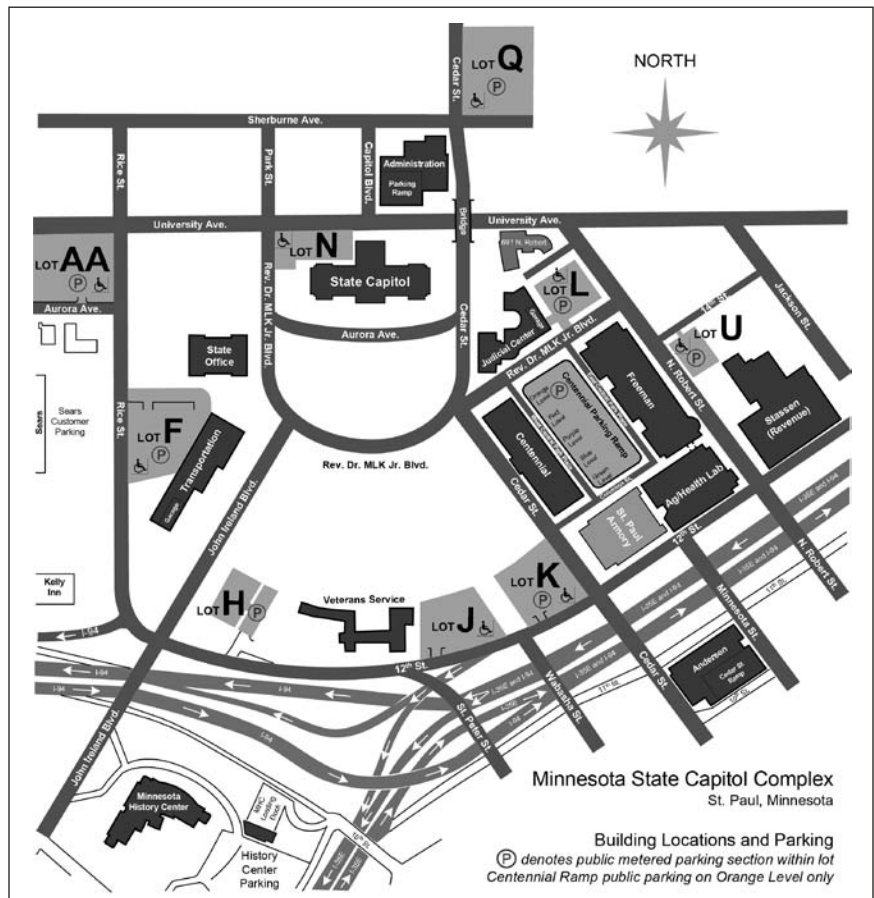
The society offers a number of specialized tours for educational groups ranging from pre-school students to high school seniors. Also, special tour events are scheduled throughout the year. A special events guide is available upon request.

For more information about the tours and fees or to make a reservation, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at 651-296-2881.

Dining

Year-round cafeterias can be found on the ground floor of the Transportation, Centennial and Stassen buildings, as well as the Judicial Center.

The Rathskeller in the State Capitol is open only when the Legislature is in session.



Edited map courtesy Minnesota Department of Administration, Plant Management Division

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1, 2012

HOUSE FILES 2493 - 2631

Monday, Feb. 27

HF2493-Anderson, B. (R)

Veterans Services Division

Noncompetitive appointment of disabled veterans in the classified service provided.

HF2494-Anderson, B. (R)

Veterans Services Division

State award issuance to Minnesota National Guard nonmembers allowed.

HF2495-Anderson, B. (R)

Veterans Services Division

Veterans removal hearing board appointment procedure modified.

HF2496-Anderson, B. (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Local approval required before state disposal facility permit issuance.

HF2497-Hansen (DFL)

Taxes

Dakota County Community Development Authority tax increment financing district subject to special rules creation authorized.

HF2498-Champion (DFL)

Public Safety & Crime Prevention Policy & Finance

Vulnerable adult financial exploitation statute of limitations extended.

HF2499-Runbeck (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

For-profit public benefit corporations incorporation provided.

HF2500-Sanders (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Debt settlement services agreements laws changed.

HF2501-Hackbarth (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

State lottery director authorized to establish gaming machines at a licensed racetrack, gaming machine revenue fee imposed, and powers and duties provided to the director; Minnesota First fund established and money dedicated for education and the financing and construction of a stadium for the Minnesota Vikings and a ballpark for the St. Paul Saints; tax rates on lawful gambling modified; linked bingo and electronic pull tabs provided; clarifying conforming, and technical changes made; and money appropriated.

HF2502-Bills (R)

Commerce & Regulatory Reform

Gold and silver coin designated as official legal tender.

HF2503-Vogel (R)

Health & Human Services Finance

Willmar Community Behavioral Health Hospital closure date extended.

HF2504-Drazkowski (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

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

HF2505-Mullery (DFL)

Civil Law

Post office box number designation permitted in the annual report of the conservator.

HF2506-Loon (R)

Education Finance

School district reserved staff development revenue allocation requirement stricken.

HF2507-Dettmer (R)

Higher Education Policy & Finance

Safety officer survivor graduate study education benefit authorized.

HF2508-Barrett (R)

Public Safety & Crime Prevention Policy & Finance

State-controlled substance schedules aligned with federal controlled substance schedules, Board of Pharmacy's controlled substance regulation authority modified and penalties provided.

HF2509-Rukavina (DFL)

Health & Human Services Finance

Health professional education loan forgiveness program requirements amended.

HF2510-Anzelc (DFL)

Health & Human Services Reform

Physician drug dispensation licensure in pharmacies located in health professional shortage areas authorized.

HF2511-Kriesel (R)

Veterans Services Division

Military personnel and veterans exempted from firearms safety certificate requirement.

HF2512-Gauthier (DFL)

Transportation Policy & Finance

State Patrol escort services contract service rates adjusted.

HF2513-Hackbarth (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Venison donation program eliminated.

HF2514-Slocum (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

City of Richfield; new arterial street grant funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2515-Hausman (DFL)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) critical habitat match funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2516-McNamara (R)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

Natural resources acquisition and development funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2517-Shimanski (R)

Transportation Policy & Finance

Other motor vehicle license plates placement clarified.

HF2518-Davids (R)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Spring Grove; alley renovation funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2519-Dill (DFL)

Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance

St. Louis County; public and private sale of tax-forfeited land bordering public water authorized.

HF2520-Franson (R)

Health & Human Services Finance

Legislative approval required before federal fund acceptance by the commissioner of health for purposes of establishing, implementing or maintaining a health-related surveillance system or registry.

HF2521-Franson (R)

Health & Human Services Reform

Health care provider participation in the state public health care programs as a condition of participation in the state employee health plans requirement repealed.

HF2522-Franson (R)

Health & Human Services Reform

Minor consent modified for health procedures and records.

HF2523-Franson (R)

Health & Human Services Reform

Vaccines manufactured with or containing human DNA informed consent required.

HF2524-Hosch (DFL)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

City of St. Joseph; regional community center funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2525-Schomacker (R)

Health & Human Services Finance

Nursing facility rate increase provided for health information technology costs.

HF2526-Kelly (R)

Jobs & Economic Development Finance

Red Wing; Sheldon Theatre funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2527-Mazorol (R)

Civil Law

Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Law enacted.

HF2528-Mazorol (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

Accident reports involving damage to state-owned infrastructure transportation provisions modified.

HF2529-Lohmer (R)**Health & Human Services Finance**

Living skills training program funding provided for persons with intractable epilepsy and money appropriated.

HF2530-Kiel (R)**Education Reform**

Probationary teachers; school board notification date changed by one month.

HF2531-Shimanski (R)**Civil Law**

Parenting plan mediation development required.

HF2532-Barrett (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Electronic prescribing of controlled substances allowed.

HF2533-Johnson (DFL)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Broadband equipment allowed a credit for installation.

HF2534-Winkler (DFL)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Voluntary registry establishment required, and information release required for purposes of firearms background check.

HF2535-O'Driscoll (R)**Taxes**

St. Cloud; local sales and use tax modified.

HF2536-Anderson, P. (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Wage credits eliminated for family members of business owners.

HF2537-Crawford (R)**Taxes**

Construction stimulation temporary authority time period extended.

HF2538-Runbeck (R)**Taxes**

Enterprise zone and economic development power technical, minor and clarifying changes made and obsolete provisions eliminated.

HF2539-LeMieur (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance**

Wetland Conservation Act exemption modified for agricultural land subject to federal requirements.

HF2540-Barrett (R)**Education Finance**

School district state aid new source created for districts with below average revenue.

HF2541-Runbeck (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Vikings stadium; National Football League privately owned stadium provided in Minneapolis, statewide business property tax phased out and bonds issued.

HF2542-Nelson (DFL)**Taxes**

Outside district expenditures modified.

HF2543-Knuth (DFL)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Children's products containing harmful chemicals reporting required.

HF2544-Loon (R)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Travel insurance offer and dissemination regulated.

HF2545-Sanders (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Absentee ballot envelope certificate modified.

HF2546-Buesgens (R)**Legacy Funding Division**

State Capitol restoration funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2547-Leidiger (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Light rail; city, county and town approval required prior to construction.

HF2548-McElfatrick (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Construction code fund; fee deposit collected into an account and funds appropriated annually.

HF2549-Holberg (R)**Civil Law**

Government data practice provision added for public access to government data online.

HF2550-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services Finance**

Health care bill of rights continuity of care provision modified.

HF2551-Runbeck (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Unemployment compensation benefit amount calculation changed.

HF2552-Westrom (R)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Trespass law modified.

HF2553-Hoppe (R)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Wealth-related claims practices regulated.

HF2554-Mariani (DFL)**Education Finance**

Career and technical levy eliminated.

HF2555-Kiffmeyer (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Sunset review changes implemented, agency requirements changed, posting required for felony or gross misdemeanor and malpractice settlements or judgments for a regulated practitioner, regulated practitioner information required, fund transfer prohibited and money appropriated.

HF2556-Dill (DFL)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Lake County; tax-forfeited land public sale provided.

HF2557-Franson (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Early hearing detection and intervention program, heritable and congenital disorder tests, the birth defects information system, occupational diseases reporting, the trauma registry, the traumatic brain and spinal cord injury registry, the cancer surveillance system and the lead surveillance system written consent required before information is submitted.

HF2558-Franson (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Legislative Commission on United Nations Agenda 21 established.

HF2559-Petersen, B. (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

County state-aid highway funds regulated.

HF2560-Scott (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

Metropolitan Council proportional distribution required for any transit reductions.

Wednesday, Feb. 29

HF2561-Liebling (DFL)**Judiciary Policy and Finance**

Public defender representation right extended to persons appealing misdemeanor convictions and post-conviction proceedings, and money appropriated.

HF2562-Banaian (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Initiative and referendum procedures and penalties provided; constitutional amendment proposed.

HF2563-Anderson, B. (R)**Taxes**

City of Clearwater; local sales tax revenue use modified.

HF2564-Shimanski (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance**

Agritourism activity immunity from civil liability created.

HF2565-Gruenhagen (R)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Public waters and shoreland debris removal clarified.

HF2566-LeMieur (R)**State Government Finance**

Charles A. Lindbergh House asset preservation funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2567-LeMieur (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Todd County senior citizens center funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2568-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Government Operations & Elections**

Judicial branch added to the state postretirement option program.

HF2569-Mazorol (R)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Debt management and settlement exemption for attorneys at law clarified.

HF2570-Scott (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

Anoka County; county state-aid highway system county road designation changed without local approval.

HF2571-Norton (DFL)**Health & Human Services Finance**

Dental services for the disabled expanded.

HF2572-Hosch (DFL)**Public Safety & Crime Prevention Policy & Finance**

New fire department establishment temporary moratorium imposed.

HF2573-Dettmer (R)**Higher Education Policy & Finance**

College savings plan contingent account holder definition modified.

HF2574-Torkelson (R)**Higher Education Policy & Finance**

University of Minnesota fisheries laboratory funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2575-Vogel (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Department of Employment and Economic Development business advocate established.

HF2576-Anzelc (DFL)**State Government Finance**

Wheeler's Point community sanitary sewer collection and treatment system funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2577-Torkelson (R)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 88, New Ulm onetime fund transfer permitted.

HF2578-Leidiger (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Metropolitan Council guidelines and plans made advisory.

HF2579-Gottwalt (R)**Education Reform**

Students with dyslexia and related disorders' needs met.

HF2580-Loon (R)**Education Reform**

Parents empowered to request school district intervention in a persistently low-performing school.

HF2581-Anderson, P. (R)**Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance**

Agriculture; food law enforcement provided, technical and conforming changes made, obsolete provisions repealed and penalties imposed.

HF2582-Gunther (R)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

Unemployment insurance federal conformity, policy and other housekeeping changes made.

HF2583-Davids (R)**Taxes**

City of Maple Grove; soil deficiency tax increment financing district subject to special rules creation authorized.

HF2584-Kiffmeyer (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Minnesota defined benefit retirement plans; contribution rate reductions or benefit improvements limited and funding recommendation required from plan administrators.

HF2585-Kriesel (R)**Public Safety & Crime Prevention Policy & Finance**

Statewide Radio Board authority expanded and updated to include the latest emergency communication technologies, Statewide Radio Board authorized to elect to become a statewide emergency communication board, tribal governments included in regional radio board structure and comprehensive authority provided under board to address all emergency communications.

HF2586-Slawik (DFL)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

State park fee discounts expanded for disabled individuals.

HF2587-Garofalo (R)**Health & Human Services Finance**

Health professional education loan forgiveness program requirements amended.

HF2588-Quam (R)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Olmsted and Wabasha counties; Lake Zumbro restoration funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2589-Peppin (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Hennepin County; watershed districts required to get municipal approval before acquiring property in the municipality.

HF2590-Rukavina (DFL)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

St. Louis County; private sale of state land authorized.

HF2591-Howes (R)**Taxes**

Bloomington; tax increment financing district extension allowed.

HF2592-Persell (DFL)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Electric fish barriers funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2593-Falk (DFL)**Education Finance**

Sparsity revenue modified for a school district that has ended an academic pairing agreement.

HF2594-Falk (DFL)**Education Reform**

Independent School District No. 402, Hendricks dissolved.

HF2595-Scott (R)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Dram shop insurance requirements exemption clarified for farm wineries.

HF2596-Doepke (R)**Education Reform**

Commissioner of education prohibited from enforcing unadopted rules.

HF2597-Franson (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

MFIP applicant and participant drug testing required.

HF2598-Kelly (R)**Public Safety & Crime Prevention Policy & Finance**

Red Wing; west fire station and training facility funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2599-Kriesel (R)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Antifreeze aversive agent use required.

HF2600-Garofalo (R)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Minneapolis; educational and cultural facility funding provided to preserve and renovate a facility for students, tourists and Minnesota residents; bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2601-Hancock (R)**State Government Finance**

Bemidji; Northern Minnesota Veterans Home funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2602-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Child care support provisions modified.

HF2603-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Civil commitment chemical use assessment requirements modified.

HF2604-Quam (R)**Education Finance**

Permissible fund transfer expanded.

HF2605-Lohmer (R)**Education Finance**

Home-schooled student shared time aid clarified.

HF2606-Hausman (DFL)**Jobs & Economic Development Finance**

St. Paul; University Enterprise Laboratories building expansion funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2607-Hosch (DFL)**Taxes**

Established religious order sales and use exemptions modified.

HF2608-Anderson, B. (R)**Veterans Services Division**

Vehicles bearing special veteran license plates allowed to park free of charge in public parking facilities.

HF2609-Davids (R)**Taxes**

Nursing home and boarding care home purchases exempted.

HF2610-Hackbarth (R)**Government Operations & Elections**

Rental housing inspections provided and criminal penalty imposed for a false report.

HF2611-Hackbarth (R)**Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Policy & Finance**

Primitive firearm hunting season provided and shotgun use area modified.

HF2612-Woodard (R)**Taxes**

Public safety radio communication systems exemption expanded.

HF2613-Westrom (R)**Taxes**

Agricultural land located within five townships of the owner's home allowed to be included in the agricultural homestead.

HF2614-Mahoney (DFL)**Government Operations & Elections**

Administrative law judge and compensation judge mandatory retirement age changed.

HF2615-Hansen (DFL)**Agriculture & Rural Development Policy & Finance**

Pesticide gross sales fee increased, proceeds dedicated to updating pesticide applicator education and certification, and money appropriated.

HF2616-Paymar (DFL)**Commerce & Regulatory Reform**

Injured employees permitted a civil remedy if an employer willfully or repeatedly violates safety laws.

Thursday, March 1**HF2617-Abeler (R)****Health & Human Services Reform**

Health-related licensing boards required to post information on regulated individuals.

HF2618-Howes (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Hospitals required to develop staffing levels for direct care registered nurses.

HF2619-Kriesel (R)**Veterans Services Division**

Special veterans' plates service branch designs added.

HF2620-Howes (R)**Higher Education Policy & Finance**

University of Minnesota invasive species research center funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2621-Kelly (R)**Education Reform**

Special or independent school districts made subject to mayoral control.

HF2622-Howes (R)**Capital Investment**

Bemidji State University funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2623-Smith (R)**Judiciary Policy & Finance**

Juvenile delinquency case period for continuance without adjudication extended.

HF2624-Beard (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

Local bridge over the Minnesota River between Carver and Scott counties funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF2625-Peppin (R)**Education Finance**

Independent School District No. 728, Elk River, equity revenue adjusted by the metro equity region factor for students residing in the region.

HF2626-Lohmer (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Automated drug distribution system authorized.

HF2627-Gottwalt (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Electronic claims and electronic transaction requirement changed.

HF2628-Gottwalt (R)**Health & Human Services Reform**

Provider peer grouping requirements modified.

HF2629-Anderson, B. (R)**Veterans Services Division**

Resolution; Congress and the President of the United States memorialized to formally recognize the Khmer Freedom Fighters.

HF2630-Draskowski (R)**Civil Law**

Regulatory taking compensation provided which do not arise to the level of taking under constitutional analysis, and attorney fee payment authorized.

HF2631-Shimanski (R)**Transportation Policy & Finance**

County state-aid highways and municipal state-aid street, construction support, and finance operation contingent appropriations provided and money appropriated.

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MINNESOTA INDEX

Exploring Minnesota

Billions in gross sales generated by the state's travel and tourism industry in 2010...	\$11.32
Millions per day, on average.....	\$31
Estimated number of full- and part-time jobs associated with state travel/tourism in 2010.....	235,258
Percent of all private sector employment	11
Wages earned by those employees, as approximate in billions.....	\$4
State sales tax collected from the state's travel/tourism industry in 2010, in millions.....	\$732.2
Percent of total state sales tax revenues.....	17
Approximate number of domestic tour operators that offer Minnesota trips.....	280
State rank in U.S. state tourism office budgets	30
Millions from General Fund used to fund Explore Minnesota Tourism in fiscal year 2011	\$8.85
Millions in fiscal year 2012	\$8.39
Gross sales generated for every \$1 invested in state tourism marketing.....	\$53
Wages generated per \$1 invested.....	\$20.40
State and local taxes generated per \$1 invested	\$4.60
Percent increase in occupancy rates in Minnesota lodging from 2010 to 2011	3.9
Increase from 2009 to 2010	6.5
National average increase in 2011	4.4
Percent increase in revenue in Minnesota lodging from 2010 to 2011	8.8
Increase from 2009 to 2010	7.7
National average increase in 2011	8.8
Percent increase in sales at Minnesota leisure and hospitality businesses from 2000 to 2010	40
Percent of all travel/tourism dollars spent by guests on shopping and recreation (each).....	25
Percent on food.....	24
Percent on lodging.....	14
Percent on transportation	12
Month for the first Minnesota Museums Month, a new statewide celebration of museums, designed to highlight museum resources and attract more visitors	May 2012

—M. Cook

Sources: Explore Minnesota Tourism, including: Annual Report 2011; 2012 Tourism and the Economy Brochure; Feb. 15, 2012, EMT Express; and 2011 Lodging Performance Changes for Minnesota, the U.S., the Region and Minnesota Areas.