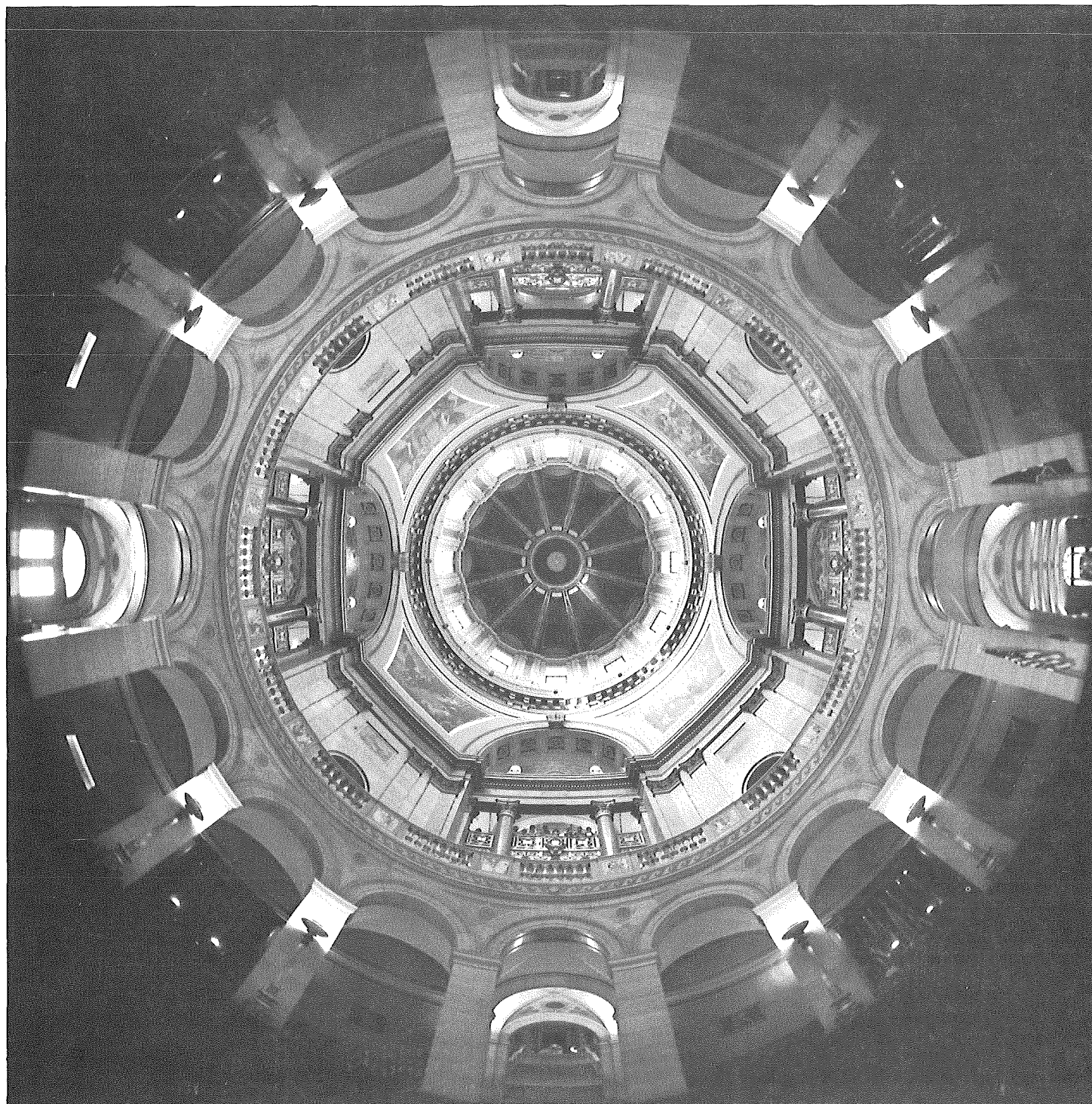


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# Perspectives

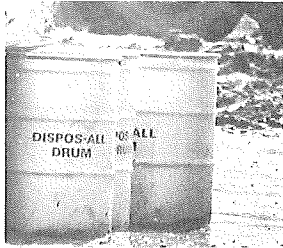
A Publication about the Minnesota State Senate



Session '84: setting the agenda



# Table of contents:



3

## Commissions: a vital link

Legislators and members of study commissions prepare for the 1984 session.

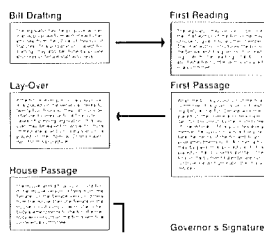


7

## Unemployment comp poses legislative dilemma

Lawmakers to address the \$425 million unemployment compensation fund deficit.

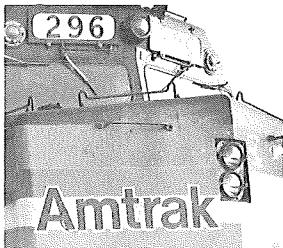
### HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW



8

## How a bill becomes law

Easy-to-read flow chart explains just how a bill does become law.



11

## Diversity marks committees' agenda

Committee chairs set goals for session

16

## Minnesota Senate Service Offices

## Perspectives

The March 1984 issue of Perspectives highlights some of the issues before Senate committees and commissions and provides some in-depth information on the unemployment compensation insurance fund deficit.

For your convenience there is a chart showing "How a bill becomes law" and a listing of the service offices of the Minnesota State Senate.

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Steve Senyk

Photographer: Mark M. Nelson

The staff also covers legislative action for its weekly news summary, Briefly, which is printed during session. The office's publications and informational brochures are available free of charge to interested citizens.

For further information, call (612) 296-0504 or write to:

Senate Public Information Office  
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State Capitol Building  
St. Paul, MN. 55155

### On the cover:

A fish-eye lens captures a kaleidoscopic view of the State Capitol Rotunda. Photographed by Mark M. Nelson and Kent Peterson.

Members of the Legislative Commission on Metro Transit spent the interim studying transit issues and have recommended creating a nine-member Regional Transit Board to set transit policy. The MTC would be reduced to three members and would only be responsible for the daily operation of the buses.



Photo by Mark M. Nelson

# Commissions: a vital link

by Steve Senyk

Before the legislature adjourned last May, several lawmakers were charged with preparing for the 1984 session by studying specific issues and formulating recommendations for the legislature. These lawmakers, together with public members, serve on commissions.

Commissions are either created by law or by gubernatorial appointment. Those established by law, referred to as legislative commissions, operate under a separate budget and are generally assisted by their own staff. Most of the gubernatorial appointed commissions receive their financing from existing state department funds, supplemental department appropriations, federal funds, or private contributions.

The reasons for establishing a

commission vary. For instance, an issue before the legislature may need in-depth study, and the legislature may decide to create a commission in order to provide for thorough examination of the issue. The Highway Study Commission, for example, was established in the 1983 gas tax bill for the purpose of studying the functional classification of all roads in the state. Or, the governor may appoint a commission to assist in formulating proposals for the legislature's consideration. Governor Perpich established several commissions in 1983 on economic recovery to develop strategies to boost the state's economy. Still, other commissions are created to serve as permanent advisory, oversight and monitoring bodies. The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources provides legislators with background data that enables them to evaluate programs to

preserve, enhance and maintain the natural resources of the state.

A legislative commission provides members from both legislative bodies and the general public the opportunity to combine their expertise and address an issue. A legislative commission is generally charged with focusing on a specific problem or problem area; whereas, a standing committee's responsibility encompasses a broader range of issues. During the legislative session, a standing committee may review hundreds of pieces of legislation. A legislative commission, on the other hand, may spend several meetings over several months reviewing and studying one specific issue. A commission may also be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of an initiated proposal and recommend needed changes to enhance the program.

Ad-hoc commissions, those established to address one issue, often sunset when they have finalized their recommendations to the legislature. Many ad-hoc commissions are created by the governor to assist him in preparing proposals for the legislative session. But the legislature also forms ad-hoc commissions to address controversial issues that warrant in-depth analysis.

The four commissions listed below are ad-hoc commissions established by law during the 1983 legislative session.

## Court Consolidation Study Commission

The commission was established in order to determine if it would be appropriate to unify the current county, municipal and district courts into one trial court. Proponents argued that unifying the courts would provide the public with the simplest and most efficient court system and reduce the costs of the system. The commission completed its study and made four recommendations:

- 1) That the municipal, county and district courts be merged into one court of general jurisdiction, which will be referred to as the district court, beginning July 1, 1985.
- 2) That the enabling legislation contain no provision permitting the jurisdictional grandfathering of matters to be heard by the judges.
- 3) That the law be changed to allow the chief justice to appoint the chief judge and assistant chief judge of each judicial district from a list of three names for each position submitted by the judges in the district.
- 4) That the legislature be careful of allowing the classes of judges to grow and the use of referees and judicial offices to expand under a unified court system.

## Highway Study Commission

It has been fifty years since the classification of Minnesota roads were last examined. Because of changes since then, the state is responsible for the care of some local and county



The Legislative Commission on Waste Management approved the implementation of the hazardous waste plan and has proposed several amendments to fine-tune the program.

streets while some local units of government are taking care of state roads. Some lawmakers felt that the state could reduce its costs in maintaining roads if a proper classification of the roads is adopted. The commission is examining the changes which need to be made, the obstacles in changing the classification of certain roads and the local government attitudes concerning the changes. (The classification of roads determines what restrictions and regulations must be followed; what weight limits of the road should be; and how the road will be maintained.)

## Commission on Metro Transit

The commission is assigned the task of studying five areas of metro transit:

- 1) The government organization of transit. Currently transit is controlled by the MTC, Mn/DOT, the Metropolitan Council and the Transportation Regulation Board (TRB). The commission is looking at which group or groups should coordinate transit in order to improve transit service.
- 2) Transit service and operation differences. The commission is looking at how effective the MTC is compared with private transit services.

3) MTC's internal structure. Currently the MTC is under the guidance of ATE, a private management consulting firm. The commission is examining the effectiveness of using ATE.

4) Transit financing. Current transit financing is raised through fares, federal dollars, state dollars and local property taxes. The commission is examining the effectiveness of the financing methods.

5) Transit service. The commission is studying the need for and purpose of transit. The members must formulate recommendations by defining whether transit should be a public service for all people or if it should be operated as a private industry.

## The Legislative Commission on the Utilization of Venipuncture

The commission has been studying the question of permitting chiropractors to draw blood for diagnostic purposes.

In addition to the ad-hoc commissions, the legislature has formed several commissions over the past several years to assist in formulating state policy.



The LCMR oversees the management of Minnesota's precious natural resources.

## The Legislative Coordinating Commission

Created in 1973, the commission serves as the administrative body for all joint commissions. It is the central accounting and compensation body for the joint commissions. Its members review commission budgets and serve as the administrative coordinating agency for employee benefits. The LCC also coordinates the legislative activities of the House of Representatives and the Senate, supervises the Office of the Revisor and oversees the Legislative Reference Library.

## The Commission on the Economic Status of Women

The Council on the Economic Status of Women was formed in 1976 and was changed to a commission in 1983. The commission was formed to promote economic security for women.

The commission has already endorsed its legislative program for 1984. New proposals include requiring cities, counties and school districts to conduct pay equity studies or to adopt

a job evaluation system and to establish a timetable for implementation of pay equity. The commission also wants to clarify Minnesota statutes to allow attachment of pensions for meeting child support and maintenance obligations and to allow consideration of pensions as marital property. In addition, the commission wants to establish a child care program in the Capitol area for children of state employees; to eliminate the tip credit in computing minimum wage; and to increase the maximum insurance benefits payable to an injured homemaker to \$200 per week.

## Legislative Commission on Employee Relations

The LCER, established in 1979, spent most of the summer of 1983 ratifying state labor contracts. In addition, the commission is examining two issues that will come before the legislature. The first is the recodification or rewriting of the Public Employment Labor Relations Act. Nonsubstantive changes are being considered that will clarify the definitions of "supervisory employee" and "public employee."

The second issue that the commission is reviewing is final-offer arbitration.

Current law provides for item-by-item arbitration, where the arbitrator has the option to render a solution that reflects the management's position or the union's position. The final decision is binding to both parties. The commission is examining the effectiveness of using final-offer arbitration.

## Legislative Commission on Long-Term Health Care

The commission is charged with researching and monitoring long-term health care in Minnesota. Last year the legislature placed a moratorium on the construction of nursing homes. The legislature also established a commission to insure that long-term health care remains adequate in the state. The commission has been reviewing several issues:

- 1) The commission has been preparing a study on the alternatives for long-term health care and is examining the success and feasibility of respite care. Respite care is relief care for family members who are providing in-home health care.
- 2) The commission is looking at ways to shift state obligated medicaid payments to medicare payments, which are federally subsidized. In addition, the members are looking at the feasibility of providing incentives of some sort to doctors in the HMO's and hospitals that would reduce prices, thus lowering the cost of medicaid.
- 3) Members of the commission are reviewing the case mix reimbursement system for nursing homes. The system will attempt to reimburse homes according to the level of disability care provided and the location of the home. The location is an important factor because prices vary according to where the home is located.
- 4) The commission is also assisting the Dept. of Public Welfare in establishing a separate formula for reimbursing nursing homes for the state rental of property. The commission will be assisting in assessing property costs and operating costs for nursing homes in order to establish the formula.



## **Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources**

The commission is not a policy commission but serves as an advisory, oversight and monitoring body. Formed in 1963, the LCMR provides data to legislators concerning various natural resource programs. The commission examines ways to accelerate or implement programs that will enhance the state's resources. The programs are designed to address future needs or improve past shortfalls. The commission concentrates on new and emerging natural resource issues that are otherwise not considered part of the regular budgets of the state agencies.

The commission has also been busy reviewing and monitoring ongoing programs that are currently funded. In addition, the LCMR is planning on holding an issue seminar following this legislative session to take a look at the status of the state's resources and the needs of the future.

## **Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement**

The commission was created in 1967 to continually study and investigate the retirement benefit plans for non-federal government employees in the state.

The commission has established a subcommittee to study the adequacy of benefits provided by the state pension funds. Minnesota has seven funds, four of which have been reviewed by a private consultant. The consultant has recommended several changes in the financing and benefit levels of the funds. The study has been the impetus for the subcommittee work.

The commission also established a Subcommittee on Buy Back to review the feasibility of establishing administrative procedures to allow for "buy back" procedures instead of having the process go through the legislative system. The subcommittee decided to make no changes in the current policy.

## **Legislative Commission on Public Education**

The commission was established in 1983 to examine elementary and secondary public education. Specifically, to study education policy development and planning and to recommend changes to improve education; to examine alternative ways to finance public education; to study current school district organization and administration; to examine current technology and alternative education delivery systems for Minnesota; to examine the methods used for preparing, certifying and retraining teachers; and to establish teacher salary policies.

The commission has established four task forces to go throughout the state and solicit testimony from teachers, students and parents concerning the strength and weaknesses of the state's public education system.

## **Legislative Commission to Review Administrative Rules**

The commission was created to insure that rules established by state agencies are "adequate and proper," and that the public has a thorough understanding of the promulgated rules.

The commission, which was established in 1974, is reviewing the advantages of instituting informal dispute resolution techniques to replace the traditional administrative hearing procedures that are conducted on both contested rule cases and in the rulemaking process. The commission's staff is gathering information and data with the aid of a pilot study being conducted by the Dept. of Natural Resources and the Dept. of Public Welfare. The two agencies have created an informal procedure for reviewing contested rule cases, similar to the procedure of a conciliation court. The informal hearing will enable the pre-hearing examiner to assess the strength of both party's arguments and indicate how the examiner might rule on the case.

The commission also held a series of hearings on state agencies' rules that affect family, group family day care providers and day care centers in Minnesota. The rules being examined are those promulgated from the Dept. of Administration, building code division; the Dept. of Public Welfare; and the Dept. of Health.

## **Legislative Commission on Waste Management**

The commission reviews and oversees the activities of the Waste Management Board, Pollution Control Agency and the Metropolitan Council. It was established in 1980, the same year the legislature passed a bill creating the Waste Management Board for the purposes of choosing a hazardous waste facility site.

The commission has advanced a proposal to the legislature that is referred to as the "landfill abatement act." The proposal, authored by Sen. Gene Merriam, establishes alternatives to landfills. The bill will be sent to the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

Over the interim, the commission listened to testimony from the Pollution Control Agency concerning the cleanup of PCB spills. The discussion focused on the health risks, costs of the cleanup and the procedures for handling PCB spills.

The commission members have also approved the implementation of the Hazardous Waste Plan and have proposed several amendments to the legislature to fine-tune the program. In addition, the commission has conducted meetings on a proposal from a private enterprise to incinerate hazardous waste. The commission has also looked at reports on deciding the dollar amounts to be allocated to waste facilities for liability and the steps needed to be taken to ensure security at a hazardous waste facility.

It is the active role of the commission members, both legislators and private citizens, that shapes the future direction of the state, for tomorrow's legislative actions will depend on many of the commissions' recommendations.



Photo by Mark M. Nelson

# Unemployment comp poses legislative dilemma

by Steve Senyk

Governor Rudy Perpich told legislators during his State of the State Address that one of the most difficult problems they will confront during the 1984 legislative session is the revision of the unemployment compensation program. Few lawmakers will argue with that statement.

Minnesota's unemployment insurance fund is currently about \$425 million in the red. The state has had to borrow money from the federal government in order to pay benefits to unemployed workers. Commissioner Barbara Beerhalter of the Dept. of Economic Security said that despite the recent economic upswing having lowered the number of unemployed workers, the fund will be about \$325 million short by the end of 1984 if the unemployment tax rate remains the same.

Minnesota first started having problems in 1974 when benefit payments to unemployed workers exceeded the employer tax contributions. That continued to happen during the economic recession of 1975 and 1976. The state's economy improved during

1977, and through 1979 the contributions exceeded the benefit payments. But, the deficits returned during the 1980 recession and continued through 1982.

In 1982 the federal government imposed interest charges of ten percent a year on the money it had loaned. The Minnesota Legislature responded by enacting revisions to the unemployment compensation law in 1983 that enabled the state to meet its interest obligation. Benefits were tightened in order to save \$70 million and employer taxes were increased in order to raise \$35 million. However, the legislature delayed action in generating funds to pay the principal of the loan.

The federal government also imposed a flat unemployment penalty tax in 1982 that affects all employers equally and is not based on an employer's experience of having laid off workers. To relieve businesses of this additional tax burden, the legislature must pay off the federal loan. To do that, the legislators will have to fix the unemployment compensation system.

Commissioner Barbara Beerhalter and Assistant Commissioner Eugene Sampson of the Dept. of Economic Security identified problems with the current system for members of the Employment Subcommittee on Unemployment Insurance during a January meeting.

Minnesota's unemployment compensation system is experience rated, which means employers pay more into the system when more of their employees receive benefits. An employer receives an "experience rating" when one of his or her employees receives benefits. These employers pay a tax rate between 1 and 7.5 percent on wages of up to \$9,000 for each employee. Employers having no experience rating pay the minimum tax of one percent on wages of up to \$8,000 for each employee. However, the revenue from this experience rated tax does not cover the entire cost of the unemployment insurance program.

Payments to workers of employers who have gone out of business; payments to claimants who are eligible after first being disqualified for benefits; and

(continued on page 10)

# HOW A BILL B

## Proposal

Individuals, public interest groups, state agencies or business organizations deciding that "there ought to be a law" transform their idea into a specific legislative proposal with the help of a legislator.

## Bill Drafting

The legislator has the proposal written in an appropriate form with the aid of an attorney from the office of Revisor of Statutes. This preparation, called bill drafting, may also be done by private attorneys or Senate staff attorneys.

## Final Passage

After the bill has been on the senators' desks for twenty-four hours, it is placed on the "Calendar." The bill is then read for the third time and a roll-call vote is taken. Thirty-four votes are needed to pass the bill, and forty-one votes are needed to pass a bonding bill.

## Lay-Over

If the bill receives preliminary approval, it is placed on the senators' desks for twenty-four hours so they can consider it before it comes up for a final vote. (In cases of pressing legislation, this lay-over may be waived to allow for more immediate attention. Legislation is placed on the "Special Orders Calendar" for this procedure.)

## Bill to House

The bill is sent to the House, and it may be substituted for the companion bill. The bill is given its first reading in the House, assigned to a committee and continues through the same process as it did in the Senate.

## House Passage

The House takes a final vote on the bill. If the House version differs from the Senate, or the Senate version differs from the House, then the Senate or the House could concur with the other body's amendments to the bill. If either body will not concur, the bill is sent to a conference committee.

## Conference Committee

A conference committee is composed of three to five senators and an equal number of representatives. Once the committee reaches a compromise, it is sent to both houses for their approval. If both houses agree to it, it is sent to the governor for his signature.



# ECOMES LAW

## First Reading



The legislator may decide to become the chief author of the bill, or he may choose to give it to another member. The chief author introduces the bill to the Senate, and it is given its "first reading." With the reading, the bill is ascribed a file number and is assigned to a committee.



## Committee Hearing

When the bill reaches the committee, the sponsor requests a hearing. During the hearing, proponents and opponents present their arguments to members of the committee. (Public attendance and participation is welcomed.)



## Committee Action

Following thorough examination and discussion, the committee may vote to pass the bill in its original form, or it may decide to make changes to the bill. These changes are called amendments, and they are adopted by a majority vote. The committee may then vote to:

- recommend that the bill be passed and sent directly to the Senate floor;
- recommend the bill to pass and be sent to another committee;
- send the bill to the floor or another committee without a recommendation for passage;
- defeat the bill or keep it in committee indefinitely.



## First Passage



When the bill is passed out of the final committee, it is given its second reading before the full Senate and then placed on the "General Orders Calendar" for discussion by the "Committee of the Whole." This provides every member the opportunity to actively debate the merits of the bill and to propose amendments to it. (At times, a bill may by-pass this procedure if it is placed on the "Consent Calendar." The bills on the Consent Calendar are non-controversial and generate little, if any, debate.)

## Governor's Signature

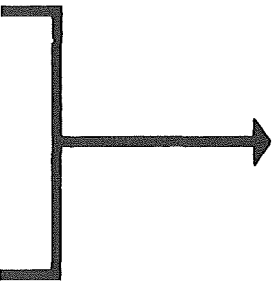


The governor may sign the bill into law, veto it or pocket-veto it.



## Veto Override

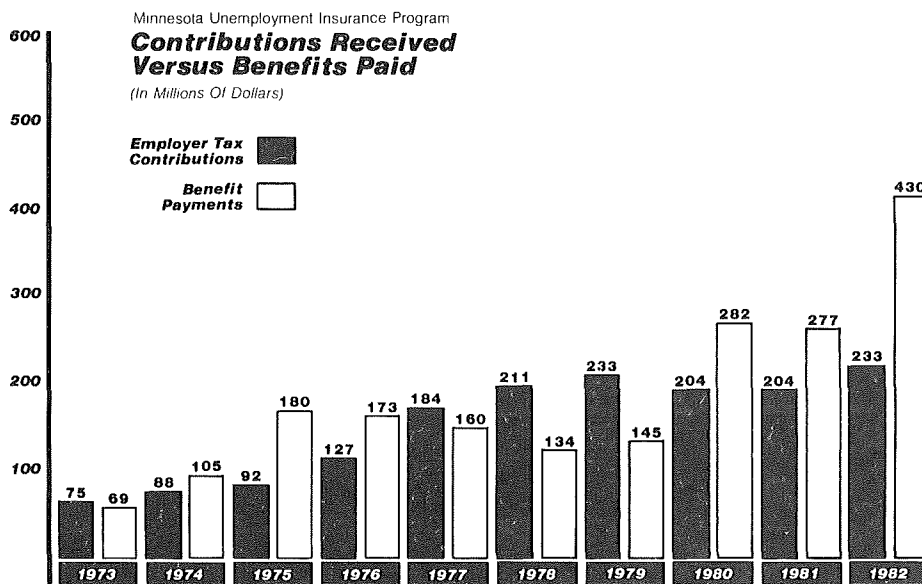
If the bill is vetoed, a two-thirds vote of each body will override it.



## Bill Becomes Law

The Secretary of State assigns the new law a chapter number.

\* This chart is for a bill originating in the Senate. A bill may originate in the House, in which case it passes the House first and then the Senate. A bill may also go through both houses simultaneously.



The chart above, provided by the Dept. of Economic Security, shows which years the benefits paid exceeded the employer tax contributions.

benefits charged to employers who are already paying the maximum tax rate are paid by all employers. Because these costs are not attributed to the employer responsible for laying off the worker, they are referred to as "socialized costs." In 1983 the socialized costs composed 46.2 percent of the total cost of the program.

Sampson said that the system allows employers to maintain their minimum tax status by making voluntary contributions to the fund to cover the benefits charged to their accounts. Because this provision is strictly experience rated, it causes the tax rate to polarize at the minimum or maximum rate. When more employers are paying the minimum tax rate, contributions to cover some of the socialized costs are reduced.

The law also limits the percentage of tax increases to employers. Small employers, those employing 20 or fewer employees and paying wages less than \$250,000, will not face rate increases above 1.5 percent a year. The increase and decrease rates for other employers are limited to 2.5 percentage points per year. These limits on tax increases also prevent the collections from meeting the costs of the system. If an employer has benefit charges levied against his account in excess of the allowable increase limit, the additional charges are paid by all employers.

Sampson also explained that because there is a maximum rate an employer may be taxed, benefits to additional workers he or she may lay off are covered by all employers.

But legislators will not only examine the problem of high socialized costs. Business leaders have said that the cost of the system can be reduced by limiting access to the unemployment compensation program and shortening the duration of benefit entitlements.

A worker may receive benefits if he has earned \$94 dollars a week for at least 15 weeks within a 52 week period prior to the opening of his claim. The \$94 figure is equivalent to 28 hours of employment at \$3.35 an hour. Benefits are determined by the length of time a person works and the amount of wages earned. The maximum weekly benefit is presently \$191. By July 1, 1984, the maximum benefit will increase to \$198. An employee is able to collect seven-tenths of a week of benefits for every week he has worked.

The longest a claimant can receive benefits in Minnesota is 26 weeks. A worker would have to have worked 37 weeks to be eligible for the maximum 26 weeks of benefits. Those who qualify for benefits by working the minimum 15 weeks receive 11 weeks of benefits. Eleven other states also provide

benefits for a maximum of 26 weeks. The department's figures show that in the last three years, 64 percent of the claims filed in Minnesota qualify for the maximum 26 weeks of benefits.

When comparing figures on Minnesota's unemployment tax with those of other states the Dept. of Economic Security used a figure that utilizes both the tax base and tax rate. The Minnesota average tax rate is 1.1 percent, about equal to the national average, which places the state 30th in the nation. The bordering states' tax rate is equal or higher than Minnesota's.

Sampson said that the lawmakers will want to examine two issues concerning Minnesota's unemployment benefits — the provisions concerning "suitable work" and "seasonal work." Current law mandates that benefits be terminated to a claimant who refuses suitable work. Business leaders have expressed concern that benefits are being collected by claimants who have refused a good job offer. The law also permits workers with seasonal jobs to collect benefits. Business leaders have argued that seasonal workers with high annual earnings should not be eligible for unemployment benefits.

Legislative action on the unemployment compensation system will hinge on the recommendations from the gubernatorial commission on unemployment insurance. The commission will attempt to reach a workable solution favored by both business and labor leaders. While business argues for tightening the eligibility access and shortening the duration of benefit entitlements, labor leaders want to ensure that any changes to the system do not affect benefit levels.

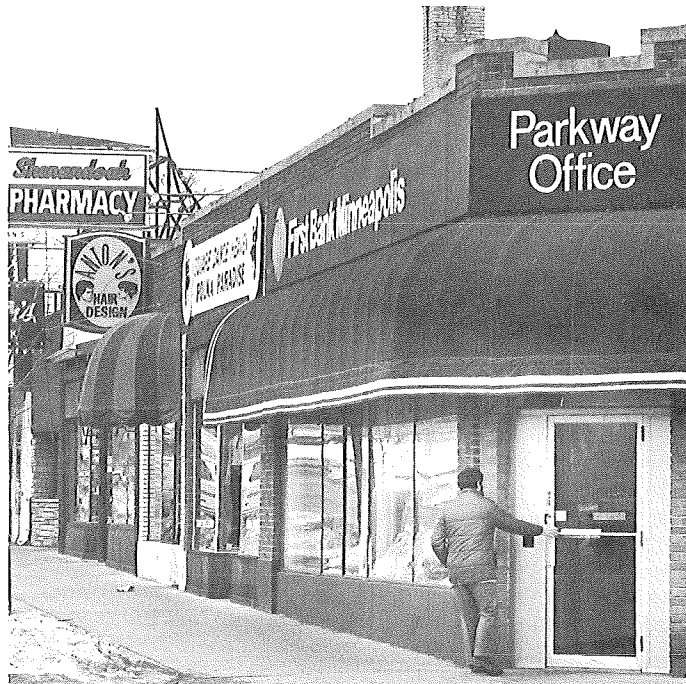
Florian Chmielewski, chairman of the Employment Committee, said that the committee will work within the structure of the system to remedy the problem. He said that the socialized costs should be at 25 percent of the total cost of the system instead of at the current 46 percent. "Minnesota's system depends too much on the socialized costs. If we do something to reduce the socialized costs, we will go a tremendous way in solving the problem," he said.



A proposal before the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee would prescribe alternative methods for disposing of used tires.



Entitled "The North Central Interstate Reciprocal Banking Act," a bill to be considered by the Commerce and Economic Development Committee would authorize interstate banking on a regional basis with reciprocating states.



Photos by Mark M. Nelson

# Diversity marks committees' agenda

by Karen L. Clark

A decidedly upbeat atmosphere is one of the most prominent characteristics of the beginning of the 1984 legislative session. Senate committee chairs, while remaining cautious, are optimistic about accomplishing the work of the session in record time and without the spectre of fiscal disaster constantly before them.

Most expressed the belief that, financially, the state has "turned the corner" and is on the road to fiscal stability. However, most expressed the feeling that the legislature must remain vigilant to insure Minnesota's continued economic recovery.

Divisive issues are still before the legislature, but committee chairs express a sense of optimism and confidence in the ability of the legislature to resolve those issues. The single most controversial issue this year will focus on the reduction or elimination of the 10 percent income tax surcharge. In fact, a primary reason for delaying the beginning of the 1984 session is to receive the most up-to-date revenue figures before deciding on a final course of action.

Each committee, though, will have a share of the study, debate and controversy inherent in the legislative process. Because of the unusually short session, estimated to run about six weeks, many of the committees have already begun their work by holding informational hearings. The following is a brief run down of what's ahead for Senate committees during the coming weeks.

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

Environmental issues will be a prominent part of the agenda for the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Chairman Gene Merriam said that he anticipates his committee will be hearing a number of proposals through February and March dealing with various forms of waste treatment. For instance, he expects hearing a bill that would expand the waste water treatment construction grants program to offset a reduction in federal grants for construction of sewage treatment plants. In addition, the panel will

consider several bills dealing with solid waste. Merriam added that he hoped to "do things to expedite the shift from landfills to alternative methods of disposal." Currently there are 131 permitted landfills in the state, and, Merriam said, the cost of cleaning them up will range from \$50 million to \$165 million. He said the committee will consider the whole range of alternatives, from hi-tech mass burn RDF (garbage as fuel) to recycling. One proposal that will be heard involves setting a fee for dumping in landfills and then using the proceeds to clean up the landfills and to finance alternative methods of waste disposal.

The continuing controversy over the siting process for a hazardous waste disposal will also be examined by members of the committee, as will various changes to last year's "Superfund" law. Committee members will also be discussing the state's role in the federal government's selection of two high level radioactive waste disposal sites. The federal government has determined that at least one such site must have a crystalline granite geological structure, and Minnesota is one of 17 states being considered.

In the area of agricultural concerns, Merriam said that he expects to hear legislation dealing with commodity surpluses in two specific areas. The first would be to increase the state's involvement in agricultural processing and the second would be to facilitate the use of agriculture commodities in a wider array of products. Merriam also indicated that a number of bills dealing with soil and water conservation would be discussed. In addition, he anticipates devoting time to fine-tuning the metro area water management act and discussing proposals which would establish state wide surface water management and planning. Study of the Legislative Auditors report on public lands will also occupy committee members as they seek a better method of keeping track of state lands.

The committee will also devote time to some familiar controversial proposals, i.e., mandatory deposit legislation and authorizing a hunting season on the mourning dove. Finally, a bill naming the morel as the state fungus will be debated by the committee.

## Economic Development and Commerce

The Economic Development and Commerce Committee, chaired by Sen. Sam Solon, will focus on a number of departmental issues throughout the session. Chief among them will be a bill containing the governor's proposals for banking deregulation. In addition, Solon anticipates that the committee will review the Governor's Commission on Economic Development and consider a substantial Department of Commerce housekeeping bill.

Solon also anticipates that "one of the more colorful bills to come before the committee will be a proposal to repeal the Federal Reserve Act." There will also be several proposals dealing with petroleum, no-fault insurance and with banks' expansion into insurance and securities, he said.

The "Buy Minnesota" law will also receive careful scrutiny, Solon said, and he anticipates that it will probably be repealed. Finally, Solon expects committee members to devote some time to considering the extension of the MEED program. The program, enacted last year, provides incentives for hiring qualified persons for public and private sector jobs by subsidizing wages for the first six months of

employment. According to testimony at an interim hearing, the program has been successful and sponsors are expected to draft legislation that would expand the program and provide for the hiring of more minorities.

## Education

In the area of education, chairman Jim Pehler stated that, "We're very fortunate compared with other states. Minnesotans were concerned about education far in advance of the national reports and the programs already in place, such as teacher retraining and technical centers, reflect that fact." Pehler does, however, anticipate that many bills will be sent to his committee because of the national emphasis on education.

"What we have done," Pehler said, "is try to use the Legislative Commission on Education as a research arm of the committees to explore and evaluate specific areas." The areas currently under consideration include teacher retraining, student performance and achievement, school system structure and curriculum development. "The idea," he said, "is not to present one solution, but to make available information on various options and then let the committees operate from there."

More particularly, Pehler anticipates the committee will hear a measure that proposes regional bargaining, rather than individual district bargaining, in

teacher contract negotiations; targeting specific research and development funds at specific districts; targeting math and science workshops for gifted students; and reviewing the status of the "hi-tech" programs that have been initiated. There will also be some review of last year's school aids bill. "The formula last year was one of the most major changes since 1972 — it brought the education aids system into the '80s," Pehler concluded.

Picking up on the theme of last year's education aids bill, Sen. Tom Nelson, chairman of the Education Aids Subcommittee, said that the major task for the subcommittee this session is setting the formula and mill rate for the 1985-86 school year. "It's wide open," he said, "what we decide is tied up with the state's financial situation and what is done with the income tax surtax."

In addition, Nelson said, "We will be taking a strong look at education technology and at Article 8 of last year's education aids bill to see how it is being implemented." Finally, the subcommittee will devote some time to examining the feasibility of "buying back," one of the shifts implemented during the state's budget difficulties. To do so, Nelson said, would "improve the cash flow for the school districts."

## Elections and Ethics

The very structure of the legislature will be discussed by members of the



Senators tour a nuclear power plant. A moratorium on fission nuclear power plants would be enacted with the passage of S.F. 1215.



Elections and Ethics Committee. Chairman Jerome Hughes indicated that the committee will review proposals addressing the concepts of reducing the size of the legislature, having a unicameral legislature, reverting to biennial sessions and holding a constitutional convention.

In the area of elections, Hughes expects that one issue before the panel will be consideration of voter identification in primary elections. "We have some indication that about 10 percent of the ballots are invalid in primary elections," he said. One solution that has been suggested, Hughes added, "is the color coding of ballots."

Another proposal the panel will hear involves reviewing the potential of voting by mail in some areas. Hughes indicated that the aim of such a proposal would be to cut costs and encourage voter participation in townships that currently have abbreviated polling hours.

Hughes also expects the committee will devote time to consideration of the governor's recommendations on constitutional offices.

Hughes expressed enthusiasm for the concept of a six week legislative session. "This is exactly what we had in mind when we established annual sessions. It is a reflective time for us and sets a precedent for the future," he concluded.

## Employment

One of the most important issues before the legislature, the state's unemployment insurance fund deficit, will dominate the work of the Senate Employment Committee, said chairman Florian Chmielewski. He emphasized that the committee's "number one task is to come up with a formula to deal with the problem." Currently, the unemployment insurance compensation fund is \$400 million in the red and is subject to a federal interest penalty of 10 percent. Chmielewski said, "I am hopeful that there can be a resolution. No solution will satisfy everyone but I'm ready to deal with the problem and I think we can."

Chmielewski also indicated that the committee will devote time to examination of the tip credit law and to last year's "right to know" law. In addition, there may be some technical amendments to last year's workers' compensation law, but Chmielewski said that any amendments would be of a very minor nature.

## Energy and Housing

Sen. Conrad Vega, chairman of the Energy and Housing Committee, cites a number of energy issues as areas of top committee priority. According to Vega, committee members will devote time to studying the issue of utility rate breaks for large natural gas users. The

issue, Vega indicated, arises from a Public Utilities Commission decision allowing gas utility companies to negotiate special rates for large interruptible customers. Vega is concerned about the long term effects of that decision and has introduced legislation on the issue.

In addition, committee members will explore a proposal to set up a mechanism for a dedicated fund to be used to pay for the decommissioning of Minnesota's two nuclear power plants at some point in the future. A measure placing a moratorium on any future construction of fission nuclear power plants will also be discussed.

Monitoring the administration of low income energy assistance programs will also be a priority for the committee, Vega said. The problems surrounding the enforcement of the state energy code in rental units will be another area for committee action, he said.

## Finance

Sen. Gerald Willet, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, emphasized the need to hold the line on state expenditures. He pointed out that the reason for the session beginning March 6 is to allow time for two more revenue forecasts to be completed before the Finance Committee finishes its work. According to Willet, "It is totally irresponsible to increase spending based on expected revenues. We are going to strongly resist any major increase."

The major issues before the committee this session, he said, would be setting the capital improvements budgets. However, Willet cautioned that the committee would be watching the levels of bonded indebtedness very carefully in order to stay well within the limits. "We will be looking at new authorizations on the basis of real need and employment opportunities," he said.

The supplemental appropriations bill will also be of concern for members of the committee. Willet indicated that most of the supplemental appropriations will be directed toward the health and human services area where federal budget cuts and continued high unemployment have compounded severe problems. Willet also praised the ongoing work being done by the Finance Subcommittee chairmen saying, "Major decisions will

Photos by Mark M. Nelson



One of the several proposals dealing with DWI laws would make alcohol breath tests mandatory in DWI arrests.

come after the last budget projections, but we will have the necessary options ready."

## Governmental Operations

A proposal establishing a state holiday honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be one of the major issues before the Governmental Operations Committee, said chairman Don Moe. The proposal, he added, would be modeled after the federal bill and would designate the third Monday in January as an official state holiday.

The committee, in addition to hearing issues dealing directly with the organization of state government, is also charged with hearing all bills relating to public employees' pensions. Moe anticipates committee work on a proposal establishing a "Universal Defined Contribution Plan." Such a plan, Moe said, would benefit everyone who paid into the pension fund proportionately according to total earnings. In addition, Moe said that the plan would eliminate the unfairness which skews benefits to long term, high paid employees only.

Moe also said the committee will respond to the recommendations of the administration and the state hearing examiner regarding changes in the state administrative procedures act, with the goal of streamlining the process.

Moe also anticipates that the panel will review and examine the question of combining the functions of some of the constitutional offices.

## Health and Human Services

The Health and Human Services Committee will again address a variety of complex issues this session, said committee chair Linda Berglin. For instance, she cited proposals for licensing adult day care facilities, a Department of Health proposal for revising HMO statutes, a proposal for shifting the oversight authority of HMO's from the Department of Commerce to the Department of Health, and LCRAR proposals for regulating family day care as all being part of the committee's agenda.

In addition, Berglin indicated that a measure re-establishing a state catastrophic health insurance program will be reviewed, as will a proposed toxic substance disclosure act. She also listed review of the Department of Planning's report on combining the Department of Health and the Department of Public Welfare as a subject for the panel's attention. The committee will also discuss Rule 36 — the department rule regulating community based facilities for the mentally ill, and the funding for continued upgrading.

In order to offset the short legislative session, the committee has maintained

a heavy meeting schedule prior to the March 6 starting date. "We are encouraging people to present their proposals early, and hopefully, all will have a chance to be heard," she said.

Finally, Berglin said that she anticipates the committee will devote some time to the question of the occupational licensing and credentialing of allied health care professionals within the Department of Health.

## Judiciary

Sen. Allan Spear, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, mentioned four major topics for committee action this year. "This is going to be a session for fine-tuning," he said, "and not for major new legislation." Thus, Spear listed Court Unification at the top of the committee's agenda. "It's an obligation on our part to review the recommendations of the Court Consolidation Study Commission's report, Spear said. Under the recommendations the county and municipal courts would be merged into the district courts.

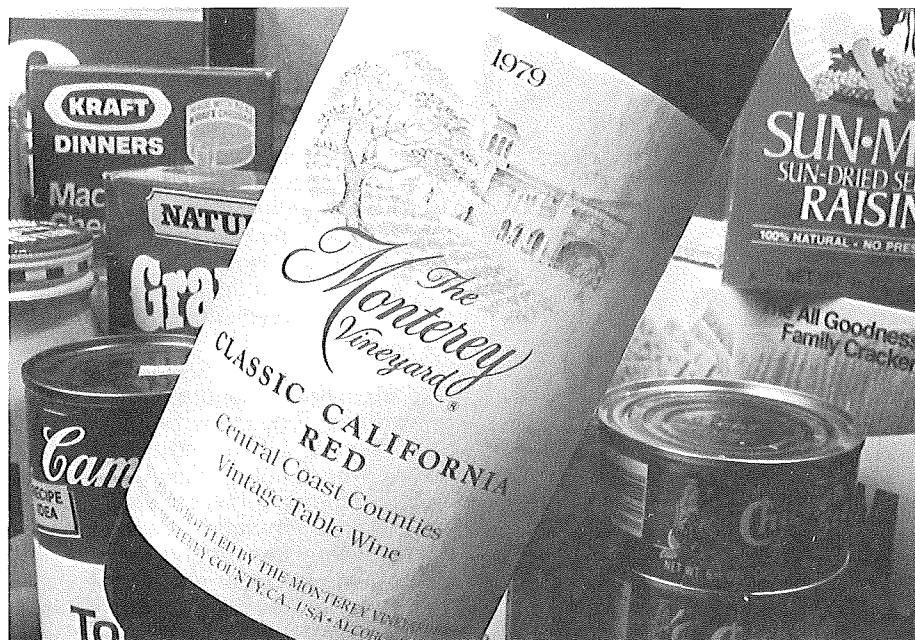
In addition, he anticipates some fine-tuning of the sentencing guidelines and strengthening the legislative oversight function in regard to those guidelines. However, Spear said that he did not expect the committee to enter into any major, overwhelming changes to the sentencing guidelines.

Spear also cited a proposal for the neighborhood mediation of disputes as an item for committee consideration. The measure would provide a mechanism "to get disputes resolved outside of the court system," he said.

Finally, Spear mentioned that a number of bills dealing with DWI laws will again be heard by the panel. One proposal would make taking the breathalyzer test mandatory in suspected cases of DWI.

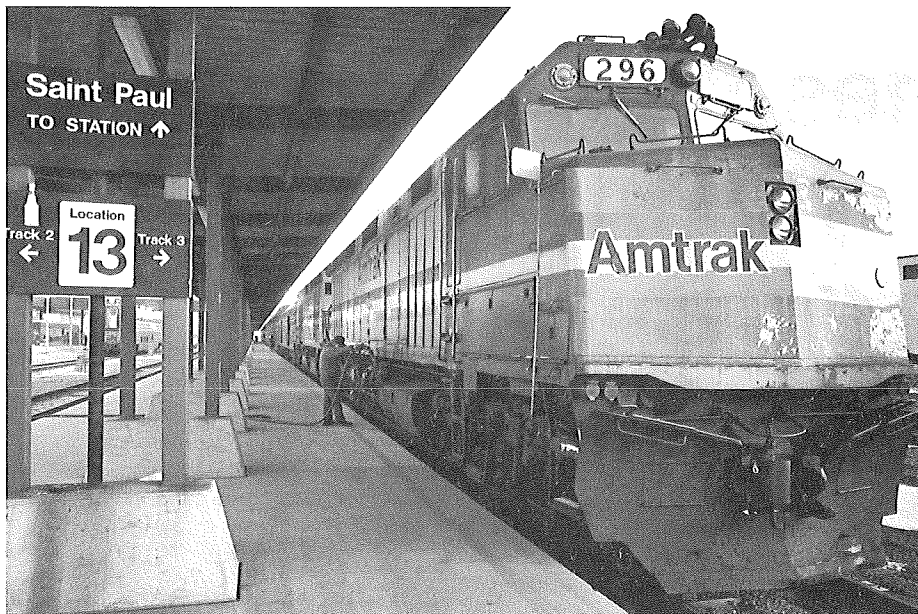
## Local and Urban Government

Recodification of the many laws dealing with townships and counties will be a top priority for the Local and Urban Government Committee, said chairman Robert Schmitz. Another major item before the committee, he said, will be a proposal for state wide remonumentation. One suggestion for paying for relocating the surveyor's corner markers, he said, would use the



Wine could be sold in grocery stores if a proposal being considered by the Public Utilities and State Regulatory Industries Committee is enacted into law.





**Expansion of passenger rail service is one of many subjects being considered by the Transportation Committee.**

proceeds from the state deed tax. According to Schmitz, the remonumentation program is particularly important in developing areas to insure accuracy in the sale of property.

Schmitz also expects the committee to devote time to hearings on the appointments to the Metropolitan Council and the report of the Governor's Task Force on the Metropolitan Waste Commission. The committee will also exercise the legislature's overview function regarding the Metropolitan Council and related agencies.

Schmitz also indicated that a proposal to remove restrictions on televising Minnesota Vikings football games would be heard by the panel. Such restrictions, he explained, would prohibit the use of the Metrodome for a Super Bowl game.

## **Public Utilities and State Regulated Industries**

Sen. Neil Dieterich, chairman of the Public Utilities and State Regulated Industries Committee, cited telephone deregulation as one of the major concerns before his committee. He indicated that the committee will closely monitor the results of the recent AT&T divestiture, especially with regard to rate increases for Minnesota consumers.

Dieterich also expects the panel to hear a proposal that would allow the sale of wine in grocery stores. In

addition, a measure establishing the Metropolitan Transit Commission as regulator of taxicabs will generate controversy, he said. Currently, each city council regulates taxis within its jurisdiction, which results in certain territorial differences. The proponents argue that metro regulation would provide better service in low service areas.

## **Rules and Administration**

Members of the Committee on Rules and Administration, chaired by Majority Leader Roger Moe, will meet on an "on-call" basis to consider matters necessary for the efficient operation of the Senate. The various subcommittees of the Rules Committee refer bills to the appropriate committees, schedule bills for floor action, decide Senate personnel matters and decide committee membership.

## **Taxes and Tax Laws**

Perhaps the most controversial issue of the legislative session will be debated in the Committee on Taxes and Tax Laws. The discussion will center on the reduction or elimination of the 10 percent surtax on individual income tax. Chairman Douglas Johnson said that his "personal goal is at least a reduction of the surtax and to provide some property tax relief." Further, Johnson expects that the "final decisions will depend on the April revenue forecasts, which will determine the size of the cut and of the budget reserve."

## **Transportation**

Sen. Clarence Purfeerst cites the governor's recommendation to accelerate the transfer of motor vehicle excise tax revenues from the general fund to the highway fund as the number one issue before the Transportation Committee. However, he added, "Personally, I would like to see the 10 percent surtax removed and property taxes stabilized before transferring the excise tax revenues." He is proposing a compromise of accelerating the transfer on Jan. 1, 1985 rather than the Governor's suggestion of July 1, 1984 or the current law date of July 1, 1985.

Purfeerst indicated that another priority for committee members will be considering the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Transit. He anticipates a restructuring of the Metropolitan Transit Commission and a change in the relationships of the MTC, the Metro Council and the Department of Transportation.

Purfeerst also indicated that the committee would monitor the ongoing reorganization of the Transportation Department. Some time will also be devoted to hearings on Amtrak passenger service and proposals to expand rail service, he said. Purfeerst also expects panel members to examine a controversy over establishing a fee schedule for overweight garbage trucks.

## **Veterans Affairs and General Legislation**

Meetings of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and General Legislation will be the setting for one of the most publicized issues of the session — the question of authorizing a state lottery. Sen. Bob Lessard, chairman of the committee, said the question before the panel would be whether to place a constitutional amendment allowing a state lottery to be placed on the November general election ballot. According to Lessard, research has shown that the state would realize approximately \$70 million per year in revenue from a lottery.

In the area of Veterans' Affairs, Lessard anticipates hearing a proposal to convert 96 beds at the Minneapolis Veterans Home to long term care beds. In addition, he said the panel will consider a measure that would authorize bonding to convert the old administration building at the Minneapolis Veterans Hospital to a state historic site.

# Minnesota Senate Service Offices

The Senate provides many resources to assist Minnesotans in understanding and playing a significant role in the legislative process.

## Senate Public Information

The *Senate Public Information Office* in Room B-29 of the Capitol provides daily schedules of committee meetings. A recorded "hotline" of meeting schedules is also available. You may call that number, 612-296-8088, twenty-four hours a day. The office also produces *Briefly*, which is a weekly summary of what happened in the committees and the actions taken on the Senate floor. *Preview*, an advance schedule of the coming week's committee meetings, is included within *Briefly*. *Perspectives*, a periodical magazine about the Senate, provides in-depth information on senators and pertinent issues. And *Session Review*, a publication explaining completed legislative action, is available at the end of session. You may call the Senate Public Information Office at 296-0504 to be placed on the mailing list for these publications.

A variety of brochures outlining the relationship between the different branches and levels of government, as well as the legislative process itself, are

available. The office staff can also help you identify your senator and offer suggestions for getting in touch with him or her.

## Reference Library

The *Legislative Reference Library* in Room 111 of the Capitol (phone 612-296-3398) has space available if you desire to listen to tapes of legislative committee meetings or floor sessions.

## Senate Index

The *Senate Index Office* is the best place to get information on specific bills. Even if you are unsure of the bill's Senate File number or title, members of the Index staff can identify it for you and explain where it is in the legislative process. Senate Index is located in Room 231 of the Capitol and may be called at 612-296-2887. The office also has easy-to-use microfilm machines for those who wish to look up the information themselves.

## Senate Office

The *Secretary of the Senate's Office* provides copies of bills for general public use. Located in Room 231 of the Capitol (phone 612-296-2343), the office also provides calendars and agendas for each day of the legislative session. One of its most important tasks is keeping a daily record of

Senate floor proceedings and publishing it as the official Journal of the Senate.

Staff members of both the Senate Office and the Public Information Office are on hand to answer any general questions you may have about the legislature and its proceedings.

## Capitol Tours

*Tours* of the Capitol are conducted by the State Historical Society. Tour guides will give you information on the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court. The tours are conducted on the hour from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday tours leave on the hour from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and Sunday tours are on the hour from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Groups of ten or more must make reservations by calling 612-296-2881. *Cafeterias* are located in several buildings throughout the Capitol complex, and a snack bar is set up near the House and Senate chambers during session.

## Visitor Parking

*Visitor parking* is often available in the Centennial Building parking ramp. Occasionally, metered parking spaces on nearby streets are available. A metered public parking lot (LOT Q) is located north of the Capitol on Cedar Street between Sherburne and Charles Avenues.

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