

Subject: Profiling the Minnesota Legislature: Sen. James Metzen

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✓ **Profiling the Minnesota Legislature: Sen. James Metzen**

by By Todd Messelt

Dolan Media Newswires

ST. PAUL, MN -- Like most veteran legislators, Sen. James Metzen, DFL-South St. Paul, is troubled by the rancorous tone of contemporary partisan politics.

As president of the Senate, Metzen is acutely aware of the partisan divide. It's a role that often has him playing referee during contentious debates on the Senate floor. But Metzen, 64, who has served 13 consecutive terms in the House and Senate since 1974, recalls a time when ideological differences were left on the floor.

"You weren't after each other's throats," he says. "You might have a little fight on the floor, but in the old days you'd forget about it. [Afterwards] you'd go and have a chicken wing and B.S. together and have a good time."

Metzen regularly wonders: Why can't we all just get along?

✓ In light of his growing dissatisfaction with the politics of polarization, he made an unprecedented move at the start of the 2007 session by nominating **Sen. Dennis Frederickson**, R-New Ulm, for president pro-tem (the officer who presides when Metzen is away from the floor.)

"What I was thinking is, it's not working out very well," he says. "Why don't we all get along and do a bi-partisan thing with my position as the president of the Senate as a symbolic move?"

"Plus [Frederickson's] just a wonderful guy ... a wonderful human being and very fair."

The nomination was approved, and it was the first time in recent memory that the majority party gave a leadership position to the minority.

Despite the divisive nature of today's Legislature, Metzen says he does see a positive trend — younger members are smarter and more qualified than ever before. "They come out swinging and they know what they're doing ... they want to be heard immediately ... and they're being heard."

As a testament to his moderate nature, Metzen actually displays a portrait of Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty in his Senate office — one of very few DFLers who'd dare to do so. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Pawlenty, like Metzen, grew up in South St. Paul, and played hockey.

Off the Senate floor, Metzen exudes a likeable good ol' boy quality. He's a little boisterous, and it wouldn't be out of character for him to let loose with an expletive or two.

In the privacy of his Senate office, Metzen treats visitors as guests. In the past, he might have even poured them a drink. But things have changed since May 2004, when FOX-9 News broadcast hidden-camera images of lobbyists and colleagues sipping drinks there.

Last year, Metzen found himself in trouble when he landed a DWI after an end-of-session celebration. He publicly apologized for the misstep, and has since kept a lower profile.

South St. Paul is a DFL stronghold within the district Metzen represents. The district also includes Mendota, Mendota Heights, West St. Paul, Sunfish Lake, Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale and parts of Eagan.

Metzen's father was a real estate broker who died unexpectedly of a heart attack when Metzen was only 14.

It was a tough time for Metzen and his brothers, Tom and David. He traces his political genes to his dad, who served on the South St. Paul City Council and the Dakota County Board of Commissioners.

Metzen's brothers also inherited the same genes: Tom once served on the Inver Grove Heights City Council, and David is a former school superintendent who today sits on the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents.

As a kid, Metzen loved hockey. In high school, he was record-breaking goalie for the South St. Paul team. He also played for the University of Minnesota and even logged a few games as a semi-pro.

After receiving an associate's degree from the U of M, Metzen joined his brother in the family real estate business and stumbled into politics shortly thereafter.

"I was walking through [South St. Paul] City Hall and the council race was up," Metzen recalls. "Bob Ketchum — the police chief in South St. Paul and a good friend of my dad's — said 'Jimmy, come here.' He gave me \$5 to file for city council. I campaigned and won."

By the time he was in his mid-30s, he had already owned and sold a 10 percent share in a local community bank. A few years later, he joined a three-person venture that spawned Key Community Bank, where he today serves as vice president of community relations.

Metzen has two sons, Jeff and John, from his first marriage. Today, he lives in South St. Paul with second wife, Sandie.

Metzen's proud of the economic development he's helped bring to his district, especially as it pertains to transportation. He's captured funds for the Wakota Bridge project and has secured money for a commuter rail study.

As a longtime banker and small businessman, he's well suited for his work as chair of the newly created Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

The committee was established to help businesses thrive in Minnesota, although Metzen is unsure whether it will meet those ends.

"I go to all of these [pro-business] groups and I say ... 'What we can do to make your life a little easier? Tell me if there's rules, regulations or laws on the books we can abolish.' But they're not coming forward like I hoped."

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Redwood Gazette

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Print this story

Legislature to convene

By Erik Posz / Staff Writer
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Print Page

The Minnesota Legislature is scheduled to return for the second year of the 85th session at noon, Feb. 12. This second session is going to be shorter than last year's session as the State Constitution allows 120 days over the biennium in which to get its work completed.

Last year, it took 75 legislative days, leaving 45 days for this year's work. Legislators must complete their work by the first Monday after the third Saturday in May, or May 19.

Traditionally, the second year of the biennium is commonly known as the "bonding year," and is reserved for consideration of investment in capital projects. Local units of government, higher education systems and state agencies have submitted proposals totaling more than \$3 billion.

However, to stay within debt service guidelines, the general obligation bond cap is likely to be around \$965 million, an amount the governor has proposed.



How many fingers do you see? Three-year-old Josh Deinken works on his fine motor skills this past week at the Early Childhood Family Education preschool screening at Reede Gray Elementary school. Kevin Kotz / Redwood Gazette

Once the February Economic Forecast is released, the bonding number could be adjusted.

Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-Dist. 21), who is the ranking minority leader on the finance committee and is also on the capital investment committee, believes the numbers on the bonding cap may be lowered due to a sluggish economy and reduced state revenue.

"The deficit could certainly go up, because of the report of the decline in the GDP in the fourth quarter of last year," Frederickson said. "That could foretell a drop in projected state revenue.

"If we have to reduce the state budget to meet that shortfall, we wouldn't have as much capacity for bonding under our guidelines. It is possible that \$965 million amount could decrease."

Frederickson said some business from last year's session needs to be addressed and may feel the pinch of the new budget numbers.

"Certainly there are unfinished items (from the first session) and the biggest is transportation," Frederickson said. "That was a bill that was passed and vetoed. And I think it is clear to everybody in Minnesota we need to address transportation issues in a very serious and meaningful manner."

Currently about 38 percent of the governor's proposed bonding bill would go to transportation. That amount would go to local roads and bridges, as well as some mass transit projects. If the projected numbers in state coffers goes down, the legislature must find places to cut the budget, and certainly the bonding bill would feel the effects.

Unlike the federal government, our state government must balance its budget. While legislators in Washington, D.C. can throw money at the economy in the hope it will improve, state legislators cannot do the same.

"I think (a state rebate) would be wishful thinking," Frederickson said in reference to the proposed federal rebate. "First off the state cannot run a deficit budget by our constitution. We must balance our budget. I do not see a re-bate of any kind in the cards, particularly when we are looking at major deficiencies in our transportation system.

"I think many people would prefer to see that amount of money put into transportation system - into our roads and bridges - so that people can get to and from work and so that industry and companies can move products to market," Frederickson added. "I think that is a vital part of the state's economy."

While this upcoming session is going to be shorter than last year's, Frederickson is hopeful that needed legislation and work can get done.

"I think hopes and expectations are always high at the beginning of a legislative session," Frederickson said. "I'm optimistic we will be able to pass some significant bills this year. I look for progress in transportation and in renewable energy, including solar energy. And biomass is a big issue, too.

"We certainly need to take some steps forward in providing healthcare for our citizens," Frederickson added. "Those would be some of the large issue.

"It would be my hope we could come to some sort of consensus between the House and the Senate and governor to make good efforts in those areas."

FOR THE REST OF THE STORY SEE THE LATEST ISSUE OF THE REDWOOD GAZETTE

County board to meet with Frederickson, Torkelson

By KURT NESBITT
Journal Staff Writer

NEW ULM — County and state officials will have a chance to talk face-to-face about things that the state may have to deal with once the state legislature reconvenes Jan. 6.

Two area state legislators are scheduled to sit down with the Brown County board to discuss legislative issues on Tuesday.

The state revenue forecast, as well as cost shifts to local government, levy limit legislation and funding for county departments and programs are among the topics on the list of things county officials will review with Republican Sen. **Dennis Frederickson** of New Ulm and Republican Representative-elect Paul Torkelson of St. James.

Frederickson is scheduled to meet with commissioners at

9:01 a.m. Torkelson is expected at 11 a.m.

Changes to county park regulations brought about by citizen complaints made to the county park board will be decided by county commissioners. Metal detectors and glass containers will be prohibited from county parks and ATV use would be limited to county parks staff under the proposed changes.

The Brown County Sheriff's Office wants to implement a 'pay-for-stay' system for the county jail that would charge inmates \$20 a day to stay in the jail. The county board authorized the system in July 2003 but it was never implemented.

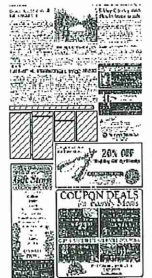
Towards the end of the meeting, the final vote on the county budget for next year will take place Tuesday morning. Brown County commissioners are expected to vote on the proposed \$27.5 million

budget and the proposed \$10.82 million levy. The vote is expected after 2 p.m.

The county board is also scheduled to vote on supplemental budgets for 2009, which include the county's building fund and law library fund.

Following the budget votes, the county board will review and adopt the 2009 salaries for the Family Services director, highway engineer, county administrator, sheriff, county recorder, auditor-treasurer and the five county commissioners.

The county will also schedule a public hearing for fee revisions or additions. County Administrator Chuck Enter has proposed 10 a.m. on Jan. 6 as the date for the hearing, which will address fee changes for Planning and Zoning services, abstractor's reports and the annual drainage system fee.



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Frederickson speaks at county board meeting

By Deb Gau
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MARSHALL — With the current economic climate, money is becoming a concern no matter the level of government. When Minnesota Sen. Dennis Frederickson appeared before the Lyon County commissioners at their regular meeting Tuesday, the talk was mostly centered around financial issues.

In a question-and-answer session, Frederickson, R-New Ulm, told commissioners there was cause for some optimism and some caution on state finances. Tax collections for fiscal year 2008 were a positive, Frederickson said, and the state's general fund revenues are \$391 million above projection. Agriculture is also doing well in Minnesota. On the other hand, the Legislature will have to deal with a projected \$940 million deficit, although "these forecasts always change," he said.

"How the national economy pans out affects how the state economy pans out," Frederickson said.

Commissioner Phil Nelson asked whether the county could expect any bridge bonding in the coming session to help with local bridges in need of repair. Frederickson replied that it wasn't likely, especially since it's not a bonding year. There could be emergency bonds issued, he said, but only for life-threatening situations.

Frederickson said a bigger issue for the state in the future would be finding ways to fund transportation besides the Minnesota gasoline tax. If sales of gasoline continue to drop

because of high prices, the state will lose transportation revenue, he said.

Frederickson also took some time to explain the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment raising sales taxes to help fund water and land protection measures and the arts. Commissioners questioned the

need for an amendment to raise the funds.

"If it's necessary, and I believe it is, why don't the legislators step up and assess the money?" Commissioner Bob Fenske said.

Frederickson didn't argue Fenske's point on needing a constitutional amendment, but explained that legislators opted to raise sales taxes because they needed a stable, long-term way to raise the money.

"We wrestled with this in the Legislature," Frederickson said, and

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ultimately decided to bring the question to the public.

Frederickson also shared his thoughts on wind energy development in the state. He said he "wasn't 100 percent sold on wind energy," partly because he was concerned about the possibility of poor coordination on energy and transmission projects. It seemed like wind energy contracts could be awarded without a plan for where power transmission lines would go.

"I think as a state policy, wind energy is good," he said. "The difficult part is the transmission lines."

In other business, commissioners said they would consider a proposal to bring cart recycling to Lyon County.

Lyon County environmental administrator Paul Henriksen presented the board with a proposal from Waste Management for a cart recycling program in the county. Henriksen said the current curbside recycling collection would be changed to curbside pickup every other week, and the 18-gallon collection bins would be changed to a 65-gallon cart.

Waste Management would supply the carts for residents receiving curbside collection, Henriksen said.

However, the proposal would increase the base price of Waste Management's contract by \$4,000 a

month. The current fuel cap adjustment would go from 6 percent to 9 percent.

Henriksen said the decision to go to cart pickup was made partly because of the response to no-sort recycling in the county.

"The recycling level has not increased like we expected," Henriksen said. There have been increases in recycling, but not significant ones.

The new proposal would increase the county's costs for recycling, commissioners said, but at the same time, the cart pickup might encourage more people to recycle. Commissioners also had questions on how to cover increased costs, and whether they could break the current contract with Waste Management and re-bid it.

The board directed county administrator Loren Stomberg to gather more cost information on the

proposal. No further action on the proposal was taken.

Commissioners voted unanimously to reappoint Dean Champine as Lyon County assessor. County Board chairman Mark Goodenow said he thought Champine's work had set a "good foundation" of information on which county financial decisions could be based.

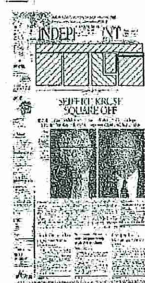
In a construction update on the new county jail, Jason Splett said work on the exterior walls of the jail is nearing completion.

Splett said precast concrete work on the jail would finish up this week, and the construction crane would then be "walked" to the north side of the building.

Preparation for plumbing and concrete slab work can then begin, Splett said.



Frederickson



Despite the signs, most legislators back amendment

STAR TRIBUNE OCT 24 '08
dennis anderson columnist



Lawn signs advocating the campaigns of candidates for various offices are strewn across Minnesota in these concluding days of the election cycle.

Perhaps none imply a more incorrect message than those of Sen. Norm Coleman and U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann when they are grouped, side by side, with signs advocating "Vote no" on the proposed Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

Such groupings occur in a relative handful of cases statewide.

The combination of signs suggests that Republicans Coleman and Bachmann, both of whom generally support low taxes, oppose the amendment (the amendment, if approved, would increase the state sales tax

three-eighths of 1 percent).

In fact, Coleman and Bachmann support the proposed amendment, as do most, if not all, of the Minnesota congressional delegation, including retiring Republican Rep. Jim Ramstad, DFL Rep. Collin Peterson, DFL Rep. Jim Oberstar and DFL Sen. Amy Klobuchar.

DFL U.S. Senate candidate Al Franken is also a supporter.

Coleman, Bachmann and Franken spoke in August at Game Fair in Anoka of their support of the Clean Water amendment. Coleman and Bachmann also displayed blaze orange "Sportsmen vote yes" placards in their Game Fair booths (Franken also might have, but I was unable to confirm it).

The "Vote no" lawn signs have been problematic for some Republicans since the state Republican Party decided to distribute them. A co-chairman of Minnesota Sportsmen for McCain/Palin quit that post when

he learned the signs were being distributed.

And Gov. Tim Pawlenty has said he had no knowledge his party planned to distribute the signs, and was surprised to hear it.

Pawlenty still abides by his "no new taxes" pledge. But he generally has been friendly to the amendment idea during his time as governor.

Pawlenty has said — and will say again on a special KARE (Ch. 11) broadcast about the amendment on Ron Schara's "Minnesota Bound" at 10:30 p.m. Sunday — that he supports the right of Minnesotans to vote on the conservation proposal.

Retired Minnesota Sen. Bob Lessard of International Falls is generally considered the originator of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment idea.

A political maverick before that term was cool, Lessard has been a DFLer and independent who also introduced President George W. Bush

at a Duluth campaign stop in 2000. A friend and fishing buddy of Coleman's, Lessard worries that signs linking the senator with the "Vote no" campaign could hurt his reelection bid.

"There are a lot of sportsmen who are moderates or independents who support the amendment and who might look at those signs and say, incorrectly, 'If Coleman's against the amendment, then I'm voting for Franken,'" Lessard said.

Of course, it's also possible the sign linkage could provide a net voter gain for Coleman and/or Bachmann.

In February, the Legislature placed the amendment on the ballot after 10 years of debate. The vote in the Senate was 47-17, and in the House 85-46.

An author of the amendment in the Senate, Republican Dennis Frederickson of New Ulm, said Thursday he was unaware the state Republican Party was distributing "Vote no" signs, or that the party was

opposing the amendment.

"I have five signs in my yard, four for Republicans and one supporting the amendment," Frederickson said. "I know some in our local Brown County Republican Committee would be upset if there was an organized effort by our party to oppose the amendment. They are very much for clean water down here, and very pro-hunting."

Meanwhile, responding to the threat of some "Sportsmen vote yes" signs in Duluth and the Twin Cities, some hunters are weighing the use of trail cameras near the signs to snap photos of any would-be vandals.

Perhaps "Vote no" supporters will employ the cameras similarly.

Doubtless, the inventors of these gadgets never envisioned their use in this way. But technology's applications are boundless. And, ultimately, nonpartisan.

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Looking back, ahead at state Legislature

By Deb Gau
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MARSHALL — It was good to see the Minnesota legislative session end on time and with a balanced budget, local state legislators said Friday, but we shouldn't celebrate too much — there's still plenty of work ahead.

✓ Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, and Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, were at a Marshall Chamber of Commerce luncheon to give a wrap-up of the session and take questions from the public.

There were plenty of positive results to come out of this year's session, Seifert said, including one-time funds allocated to Minnesota nursing homes and K-12 education. However, he said he was concerned that state reserves were depleted too much to make a balanced budget.

"The budget reserve was at about \$600 million, and it was drained by about half a billion dollars," Seifert said. "I'm very fearful the reserves were drained far too much."

"Unless the economy really starts picking up," he said, it could have negative results.

Although the budget will be balanced through next July, Seifert pointed out there will be a deficit in the next biennium.

Legislature PAGE 3A

"We made some very significant reductions to the budget," in addition to the use of reserves, Frederickson said. "It didn't mean there weren't spending increases." Some of those increases included the funding for edu-

cation and nursing home staff, he said.

Frederickson also explained some of the new health care reforms put in place, including measures that allow health care providers to offer "baskets of care," single-price packages for chronic diseases, and "health care homes" to coordinate patient care. The idea is to make health care more cost-efficient while providing community incentives to cut down on obesity and other major health risks, he said.

Audience questions ranged from education to road and bridge funding, and the future of the JOBZ program, which was retained in the new tax laws.

Both Seifert and Frederickson said they felt JOBZ was important for the region, but stressed that people should make sure their lawmakers know that.

"With this area, job growth is a big deal," Seifert said. However, the program met with DFL opposition this year.

"As long as (Gov.) Tim Pawlenty is around, JOBZ will be around," Seifert said. The program extends for another five years, but whether it will be renewed is

not yet certain.

"Some have argued that there shouldn't be special tax breaks for everyone," Frederickson said of JOBZ - an argument that does make economic sense. However, he said, "This is the real world," where communities in greater Minnesota need to compete with those in South Dakota for jobs and businesses.

"I don't expect (JOBZ) will be eliminated," Frederickson said. "My hope is that we can extend it."

With session negotiations over, Seifert shared some of the events behind a regional amateur sports facility in Marshall not being included in a \$105 million state bonding bill. Several amateur sports projects from around the state, including Marshall's, were originally included in the bill. Gov. Pawlenty removed all of them with a line-item veto, Seifert said.

The bonding bill was cut down to allow for projects like Central Corridor light rail, construction at the Minneapolis Veterans Home and the creation of Lake Vermilion State Park, Seifert said. Seifert said it would have been possible for him as House Minority Leader to try and get the Marshall sports project back in the bill. But because other similar projects had been vetoed, he was "not comfortable" with the inconsistency that would create.

■ Sen. Dennis Frederickson and Rep. Marty Seifert spoke Friday about successful session, future



Frederickson



Seifert

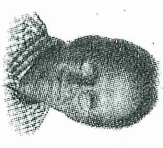


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There are plenty to thank, but there's more work to be done

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 25 '08



dennis anderson columnist

● A lot of people deserve credit for getting a proposed constitutional amendment for dedicated funding to voters. Now all that's left is its passage.

Of commodities in short supply these days, cynicism is least among them. Employees are full of it, even more so, voters — your average stiff who show up at polling booths wanting to believe the future will somehow be better than, or at least different from, the present.

Yet, and still, doubtful as ever, they cast their ballots with a shrug

and shuffle away.

But consider now the recent legislative session, a place of winners and losers, as always, but one also in which good triumphed not once but twice for Minnesota and its residents, seemingly against odds.

In the process, cynicism was beaten back, at least a bit. At issue fundamentally was the fate

▶ **ANDERSON FROM C16**

In most sessions, gaining placement of the amendment plan on the November ballot would have been victory enough. But hunters and anglers understand too well that the cynicism mentioned earlier festers always among people as if in a Petri dish, ready to infect even the best ideas.

So they insisted a citizens-legislative council be organized to oversee about \$90 million in fish- and wildlife-habitat expenditures, should the amendment be approved.

Here again lawmakers did the right thing and voted to arrange a 12-member council comprising eight citizens and four legislators — again, assuming voters OK the amendment.

A long-held truism has it that victory has a thousand fathers, while defeat is an orphan. Fair enough. But in this case, success depended on far more than a thousand fathers — and mothers.

Among legislators who championed the amendment and council ideas in addition

of a proposed constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the state sales tax to intensified conservation. Following a fortuous, 10-year path, this idea — sound and necessary — seemed perpetually snakebit. Most knowledgeable observers agree Minnesota is fast dissolving into itself, maintaining its historic boundaries while vacating its most valued assets — clean lakes and rivers, wetlands, prairies, forests.

Yet in statehood, the Legislature has failed to defend these resources in meaningful ways. Such inaction is counterintuitive, because the health of our land and

to Pogemiller and Kellher were Sen. Satveer Chaudhry, DFL-Fridley; Rep. David Dill, DFL-Crane Lake; and in fact all members of the House-Senate conference committee that fashioned, in the session's final hour, the citizens-legislative council.

Republicans were among these heroes, perhaps especially Sen. Dennis Frederickson of New Ulm.

Yet credit should accrue mostly to the countless regular folk who during the past 10 years have given freely of themselves, their time and money in defense of their state.

Space allows only a brief listing. But among these are retired Sen. Bob Lessard of International Falls, an originator of the amendment idea; the late Sen. Dallas Sams, who shouldered the legislation valiantly; John Schroers, Lance Ness, Jim Cox, Kevin Aushund, Don McMillan and Garry Leaf of the Twin Cities; all members of the Nicollet Sportsmen's Club; Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Minnesota Waterfowl Association and Minnesota Deer Hunters

Association members statewide, as well as paid staff of these and other conservation and environmental organizations, including The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Minnesota, the Izaak Walton League and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; the thousands who attended the two Ducks, Wetlands and Clean Water Rallies on the Capitol Mall; members of the "Orange Hats" brigade; and Dave Zenner of Duluth.

Add to these the thousands of Average Joes and Joans who phoned or e-mailed their legislators in recent months.

Now these believers and many, many other Minnesotans are working to ensure passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in November.

Here's hoping you join them. All you have to gain is a better future for yourself, your kids and grandkids.

All you have to lose is your cynicism.

Dennis Anderson
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water and the futures of Minnesota and Minnesotans are linked. Fragmented forests, polluted lakes and wildlife losses weigh on our collective psyche: burn us out in ways obvious and not.

Which is why, 10 years ago, a concept took shape that this Legislature, in the first days of its recent session, finally approved in the form of a proposed constitutional amendment.

The idea is this: Minnesota voters will have a chance in November to raise the state sales tax three-eighths of 1 percent (costing average Minnesota families about \$1 a week) and use the \$270 million in annual

receipts to restore fish and wildlife habitat, clean up lakes and rivers, expand parks and trails and sustain the state's arts and cultural heritage. Many legislators and a governor or two have stood in the way of this idea over the years. But during this session, the state's political stars aligned as perfectly as political stars can align, not least those orchestrated by Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, the Senate majority leader and Margaret Anderson Kellher, DFL-Minneapolis, the House speaker.

Anderson continues: A lot is on the line with this amendment. C14▶

Frederickson reacts on deficit reduction

By RON LARSEN
Journal Staff Writer

ST. PAUL — “Keep in mind we are trying to close a \$965 million gap in the state budget so there is virtually nothing in the budget-balancing bill that pleases anybody,” says state Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm.

He was talking about the Senate’s budget-balancing bill which was approved in the Senate “on general orders” Thursday evening. It now will be on the Senate’s Monday calendar for a confirming vote which is not subject to debate, he said. Then, it will go into conference committee where, along with the House version, it will be mulled by Senate and House conferees, as well as members of the governor’s staff, he said.

“Because we’re using reserve funds, we’re cutting programs and projects that we just funded less than a year ago. The results of this bill will make programs a little more difficult for counties and cities. So, there isn’t much to like in that bill other than we absolutely need to balance the state budget, and we need to make some difficult decisions on how we are going to do it,” Frederickson said.

However, “in my view, the most positive part of the bill is that there are absolutely no reductions in K-12 education. That’s the positive; the negative is that we are going to use \$350 million from the cash-flow account, and we’re going to use \$100 million from the budget reserve [to balance the budget].”

The bill passed by the Sen-

ate “makes \$834 million worth of changes. The budget shortfall, rounded off, is \$935 million as of February’s last forecast. So, that means about \$100 million of the budget balance is coming from the tax bill,” Frederickson explained.

“The biggest change in the tax code is to close a corporate loophole where a corporation could be doing business in Minnesota, send the income to an off-shore account, typically the Cayman Islands, and then send the money back to Minnesota and avoid corporate income tax. The tax bill raises about \$100 million by closing that loophole,” he said.

“Now, the tax bill raises a little more money than that, and I don’t recall all of the details. There’s about \$26.5 million for victims compensation for the 35W bridge collapse victims carried in an amendment, and, in the bonding bill, there’s about \$17.5 million of cash being spent in that bill,” Frederickson continued.

“Some of that money is for debt service as we did not put in enough money in last year’s bill for debt service, and some of the projects that are in the capital investment committee do not qualify entirely for bonded indebtedness so we need to use cash.

When the Senate bill goes to conference committee, there will be discussion between the

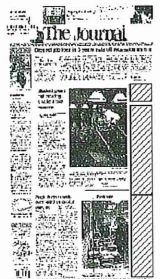
Budget

Continued on page 8A

Senate conferees, the House conferees, and the governor’s staff, Frederickson said.

“The end result is expected to be a bill that the governor will sign, and we’ll pass. It will have 34 votes in the Senate, and 67-68 in the House. This is the entire budget-balancing effort because we also have a tax bill that solves part of the problem.

Ron Larsen can be reached at rlarsen@nujournal.com



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Journal Staff Writer

ST. PAUL — "Keep in mind we are trying to close a \$965 million gap in the state budget so there is virtually nothing in the budget-balancing bill that pleases anybody," says state Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm.

He was talking about the Senate's budget-balancing bill which was approved in the Senate "on general orders" Thursday evening. It now will be on the Senate's Monday calendar for a conference vote, which is not subject to debate, he said. Then, it will go into conference committee where, along with the House version, it will be mulled by Senate and House conferees, as well as members of the governor's staff, he said.

"Because we're using reserve funds, we're cutting programs and projects that we just funded less than a year ago. The results of this bill will make

programs a little more difficult for counties and cities. So, there isn't much to like in that bill other than we absolutely need to balance the state budget, and we need to make some difficult decisions on how we are going to do it," Frederickson said.

However, "in my view, the most positive part of the bill is that there are absolutely no reductions in K-12 education. That's the positive; the negative is that we are going to use \$350 million from the cash-flow account, and we're going to use \$100 million from the budget reserve [to balance the budget]."

The bill passed by the Senate "makes \$834 million worth of changes. The budget shortfall, rounded off, is \$935 million as of February's last forecast. So, that means about \$100 million of the budget balance is coming from the tax bill," Frederickson explained.

"The biggest change in the tax code is to close a corporate loophole where a corporation could be doing business in Minnesota, send the income to an off-shore account, typically the Cayman Islands, and then send the money back to Minnesota and avoid corporate income tax. The tax bill raises about \$100 million by closing that loophole," he said.

"Now, the tax bill raises a little more money than that, and I don't recall all of the details. There's about \$26.5 million for victims compensation for the 35W bridge collapse victims carried in an amendment, and, in the bonding bill, there's about \$17.5 million of cash being spent in that bill," Frederickson continued.

"Some of that money is for debt service as we did not put in enough money in last year's bill for debt service, and some of the projects that are in the capital investment committee do not qualify entirely for bonded indebtedness so we need to use cash.

When the Senate bill goes to conference committee, there will be discussion between the

Budget

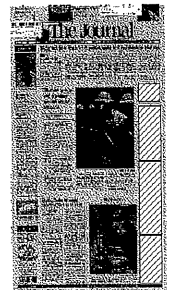
Continued on page 8A

Senate conferees, the House conferees, and the governor's staff, Frederickson said.

"The end result is expected to be a bill that the governor will sign, and we'll pass. It will have 34 votes in the Senate, and 67-68 in the House. This is the entire budget-balancing effort because we also have a tax bill that solves part of the problem.

Ron Larsen can be reached at rlarsen@nujournal.com

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OTHER VIEW

The GOP is courting voter displeasure

Post-Bulletin of Rochester

So far this legislative session, the most noteworthy act by the state's Republican Party has been to throw six GOP members in the House under the political bus for daring to buck party leaders and Gov. Tim Pawlenty to approve a transportation package over Pawlenty's veto.

"The Override Six," as they're now known, have been stripped of committee posts, and their party endorsements for re-election have been delayed or, in some cases, denied.

✓ Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, a six-term Republican from Andover/Coon Rapids, has decided she's had enough. Beating her party and the delegates in her district to the punch, she pulled her name out of the running ...

She says that her treatment by the GOP caucus is only one factor in her decision, but to hear her describe it, the current atmosphere in the House isn't one that promotes a lot of free thinking.

...

✓ Sen. Dave Senjem, a Republican from Rochester and the Senate minority leader, wasn't pleased to learn of Tingelstad's impending departure.

...
Senjem, whose job it is to maintain GOP unity in the Senate and try to gain a Republican majority, saw two members of his caucus,

✓ Sen. Steve Dille of Dassel and Sen. Dennis Frederickson of New Ulm, break ranks on the override of Pawlenty's transportation bill veto.

Senjem chose a more measured response.

"We handled it internally," he said. "Obviously, we would have liked them to vote with us, to show some solidarity, but I absolutely wasn't going to flog them publicly if they didn't. What kind of message would I be sending to the Dille and Frederickson districts about the Republican Party if I did that?"

That, of course, points to the biggest danger the House GOP caucus is courting: a negative response from voters.



Finstad: spending could bankrupt state

Within 10 years

By FRITZ BUSCH
Journal Staff Writer

✓ SLEEPY EYE — Outgoing Minnesota Dist. 21B Rep. Brad Finstad of Comfrey voiced disgust Saturday with Minnesota legislators that helped create a budget deficit of more than \$900,000.

"Some Democrats think they can do whatever they want (raising taxes)," Finstad said at the Brown County Republican Convention at the Orchid Inn.

"We just got our largest tax increase in state history," he added. "Welfare and entitlement spending could bankrupt the state if in 10 years if we stay on this road."

Finstad noted his displeasure with welfare programs that allow people to buy cigarettes and junk food.

That isn't all that bothers him in St. Paul.

"We have a pro-choice and very anti agriculture Legislature," said Finstad. "They want to move agriculture regulations from the Agriculture Department to the Department of Public Health."

He voiced his opposition to single-payer health care.

On a lighter note, Finstad's wife is expecting the couple's fourth child in July.

"I'm doing my part to fight declining enrollment," Finstad said.

He thanked Republicans for supporting him, particularly during his early days in office, which he said were among the most challenging. He received a standing ovation.

✓ Dist. 21 Sen. **Dennis Frederickson** of New Ulm said the legislature needs to cut corporate income tax and balance the budget before it adjourns this year.

Frederickson said he supported the gas tax bill and called it a "reasonable compromise."

"For a modest increase in gas tax and license tabs, Minnesotans will be driving on safer highways, incur fewer costly car repairs, have less delay in their commutes and have increased available transit," Frederickson stated in a hand out.

Dist. 21B candidate Greg Bartz of Sleepy Eye said he's been involved in politics since he was elected as a delegate to the Brown County Convention at age 18 in 1972.

Dist. 21B candidate Dean Simonsen of Sleepy Eye promoted devoting the same emphasis to educating gifted and talented children than it now devoted to special education.

He opposes single-payer or socialized medicine and more accountability at all health care levels.

Another candidate, Paul Torkelson of St. James, supported family values, government accountability and rural economic development.

Ruthie Hendrycks of Hanska, a fourth candidate, said she

would have voted against the state transportation bill and the conservation and arts bill that will be on the November ballot.

She voiced opposition to amnesty and driver's licenses for illegal immigrants and human trafficking.

The Dist. 21B candidate will

GOP

Continued on page 8A
be chosen at an endorsing convention set for 7 p.m., Thursday, May 22 at the Springfield Community Center.

Resolutions approved at the convention included:

- Forming U.S. policy that restricts importation of ag products that can be produced here in abundance.

- Adopting a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget except when Congress declares war.

- Speeding up inheritance tax reform while indexing limits for inflation.

- Allocating federal road/bridge repair funds to out-state (rural) projects.

- Opposing the establishment of an absolute "right" to abortion for any reason in the Minnesota Constitution.

- Urging the Minnesota legislature to ban "cruel" saline abortions.

- Supporting education vouchers for lower-income families with children.

Hendrycks invited people to e-mail her with campaign issues at hendrycks2008@yahoo.com

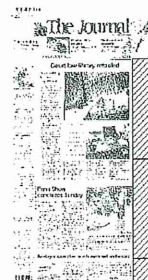
Elected district convention delegates were Lori Wightman, Lyle Lange, Gordan Batzlaff, Betty Heymans, Dan Olson, Gerald Woodley, Robert Fuller, Mike Dove, Jim Lamecker, Dean Simonsen, Greg Bartz, Jacque Fuller.

Alternates Hannah Ewerdt, Dennis Frederickson, Dawn Turbes, Jane Peichel, Joan Rosenhamer, Jason Pankonin, Sven Eelma, Mary Bartz, R.E. Wehrwein, John Baier, Carol Lange, Gary Poortvliet.

State Convention delegates Jim Lamecker, Laura Spooner, Dawn Turbes, Andrew Wagner, **Brad Finstad**, Gerald Woodley, Scott Waldner, Dean Simonsen, Mary Bartz, Hannah Ewerdt, Robert Fuller, Jacque Fuller.

Alternates, Lori Wightman, R.E. Wehrwein, Terry Turbes, Greg Bartz, Joan Rosenhamer, Gary Poortvliet, Greg Bartz, Mike Dove.

Fritz Busch can be e-mailed at fbusch@nujournal.com



Plan pledging money for outdoors, arts hits ballot



Frederickson

By Per Peterson
phpeterson@marshall
independent.com

The fate of a sales tax aimed at guaranteeing money for programs that would protect wildlife habitat, drinking water and the arts will be in the hands of the voters this November thanks to House Senate passage Thursday of the Legacy Act, a measure that seeks to amend the state constitution and set aside funding for natural resources and cultural heritage.

The 3/8ths of 1 percent increase to the tax — a little below 4 cents on every \$10 purchase — would take effect in July 2009 and remain in place for 25 years. It is projected to raise \$276 million by 2011, the bulk of which would

Plan PAGE 10A

go for environmental conservation.

The votes to place the initiative on the ballot — 85-46 in the House and 46-17 in the Senate — didn't fall along party lines. Minnesota governors don't get a say on which amendments are put to voters.

✓ **Sen. Dennis Frederickson**, DFL-New Ulm, who sits on the Capital Investment Environment and Natural Resources Forestry Subcommittee and is lead minority member of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Budget Division, predicted months ago that the Legacy Act would indeed gain enough approval in the Legislature to make the November ballot.

"It doesn't surprise me," Frederickson said of Thursday's House and Senate approval. "We knew pretty well that the votes were in the House and Senate to pass it; during

the last session, we simply ran out of time. At the beginning of the week, the first day (of the session) we looked at the work we had done last year and amazingly we didn't see anything we wanted to change in it. Usually, when you leave a document to lay for a while you find a technical issue that you'd like to change or correct, but we didn't find any flaws in it."

The bill had been hanging over the Legislature for nearly a decade, starting as a dedicated money plan mainly for habitat protection and wetland rehabilitation. In recent years, it has evolved to encompass arts and cultural heritage programs.

Advocates promote it as a way to protect key features of Minnesota's quality of life from budget pressures. Outdoors programs are often the first squeezed in tough budget times because lawmakers don't want to trim bigger-dollar categories like education and health care.

Some Republicans complained that arts programs shouldn't be on par with natural resources and argued the money should be carved from the existing sales tax. Several Democrats objected on the grounds it would hit the poorest Minnesotans the hardest because the sales tax consumes a greater portion of their income.

"My view is that the arts are very much a cultural legacy in Minnesota," said Frederickson. "There are 11 arts councils around the state that fund the arts all over Minnesota — from theater groups, choirs, graphic arts, prose — some in Marshall and Lyon County. Arts and art education stimulates a creative side of our brains, and we need to stimulate that creativity in Minnesota — and in our society — if we are going to successfully compete for people to live in Minnesota and have our citizens create new programs and products that will bring even more economic development to our state. I think it's important to have that type of education readily available in Minnesota."

✓ State Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, who voted no, wondered why lawmakers would stop at the legacy bill and its sales tax. Why not, he said, put other funding issues before voters — such as transportation funding.

"Why not go around me, around the governor, and just put it to the vot-

ers?" Seifert said, frustrated.

He also said "arts and crafts don't rise to the level of health care," in terms of a funding priority. And he opposed the bill because a sales tax increase is regressive.

"I find it surprising that the first two bills out of the chute are regressive taxes on the working class," Seifert said. "Sales taxes are the most regressive taxes you can find."

The state's sales tax is currently 6.5 percent. But some local governments have won permission to tack on more for specific purposes, like Hennepin County's additional 0.15 percent tax to pay debt on the new Minnesota Twins ballpark. The transportation plan under consideration would tack another 0.5 percent onto the sales tax in the seven-county metropolitan area for transit projects.

Don McMillan, president of the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance, is nervous as the effort enters its next phase. The alliance is made up of 45 groups, including Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever.

"We feel our constituents are not going to vote for this," he said, stressing his own support for the measure.

The AP contributed to this story



A FEW TRULY INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS

To six Republican representatives and two senators in the Minnesota Legislature who voted in favor of the bipartisan, common-sense road funding bill passed by both houses of the Legislature but vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.



Reps. Rod Hamilton of Mountain Lake, Jim Abeler of Anoka, Ron Erhardt of Edina, Bud Heidgerken of Freeport, Neil W. Peterson of Bloomington and Kathy Tingelstad of Andover, and Sens. Dennis Frederickson of New Ulm and Steve Dille of Dassel should be commended for not only their political courage in voting against their party's leader but also their resolve to do the right thing for their constituents and not kowtow to party politics.

These legislators saw the need to solve the safety, congestion and condition problems of Minnesota highways.

The representatives are indeed helping the governor reach the goals he says he wants to meet on his own "Department Results" Web site. The governor is unwilling to meet the goals he has set for himself, and these representatives are holding him accountable.

Hats off to them. They represent the best in what used to be known and revered in Minnesota as Independent Republicans.

Local Republicans vote against solution

To local Republicans in the Mankato region who voted against the bipartisan common-sense road funding bill vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on Friday.



They include Rep. Tony Cornish of Vernon Center, Rep. Laura Brod of New Prague, Rep. Bob Gunther of Fairmont, Rep. Brad Finstad of Comfrey, and Sens. Dick Day of Owatonna and Julie Rosen of Fairmont. Rep. Connie Ruth of Owatonna

did not vote either way. Each of them represents counties that are charging their taxpayers for roads the state is obligated to fix but simply will not. Their friends across the aisle made significant compromises on a transportation funding bill, yet, they apparently offered no compromise, or no solution of their own.

By their vote, they cost each of their counties millions in road funding.



Gas tax goes through

Legislature overrides veto

By Mark Fischenich
Free Press Staff Writer

Minnesota lawmakers voted Monday to override Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto of a major transportation funding bill that will finance \$6.6 billion in road, bridge and transit projects through increases in the gas tax, license tab fees and sales taxes in some areas.

When the Senate followed the House in voting to override the veto and approve the first increase in the state's 20-cent per gallon gas tax in 20 years, cheers arose from transportation supporters in the gallery and in the corridors outside, according to Sen. Kathy Sheran.

"There was just a huge roar of applause as we walked out of the chamber," Sheran said in a telephone interview. "It was amazing."

The applause was for legislative Democrats, who voted unanimously in the House and Senate for the override, and for the eight Republicans who defied the wishes of their GOP governor.

"It's my belief that when you support good public policy that is good for the district you represent, that that is the

Please see GAS TAX, Page A2

course you should take," said Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, one of two Republican senators to support the override of Pawlenty's Friday veto.

The override will result in an almost immediate increase of two cents in the gas tax. Another three cents will be added on Oct. 1. The first half-cent of an additional temporary 3.5-cent increase — which will be phased in over five years and will be used to pay off \$1.7 billion in bridge and highway bonds — could also be imposed by October, said Rep. Terry Morrow, DFL-St. Peter.

License tab fees on relatively expensive new vehicles will also be higher, and the Twin Cities metro area will see a new quarter-percent sales tax to pay for mass transit. Outstate counties will have the option of putting a half-percent sales tax in place to pay for transportation projects, but only if voters agree through a referendum.

Other than Frederickson and Rep. Rod Hamilton of Mountain Lake, area Republicans supported Pawlenty's veto.

"I was just voting for my commuters," said Rep. Tony Cornish, R-Vernon Center. "That 8.5-cent a gallon (increase) is too much. ... Every day and every week when people fill up their tank, they're going to pay."

Even when the entire 8.5 cents is fully added, the 28.5-cent gas tax won't have the buying power the 20-cent gas tax had in 1988, according to inflation calculators.

"But what we've reversed today is a trend of always putting off and delaying," Sheran

said. The increased road spending is a worthy investment, said Morrow, a member of the House Transportation Committee and a co-sponsor of the bill.

"It's good for roads, it's good for bridges, it's good for transit, it's good for jobs," he said. "... For people who have been working for years for highways 14 and 60, for county roads and township roads, this is a good day."

Lawmakers anticipate the boost in revenue will have an impact already in the upcoming construction season, and the bill is ultimately estimated to create 33,000 jobs a year for five years. The bill specifically targets some of the funding to roads that are ready to build, a provision that could help the Highway 14 and Highway 60 expansion projects climb higher on the list of competing projects.

Cities, counties and townships will also get a portion of the revenue, making the bill a top priority for local governments that have been struggling to keep up with road projects as state support declined. Frederickson said he believes all of the counties in his sprawling senate district have increased property taxes to make up for the failure of the state to pay its traditional share.

Frederickson said it's more appropriate for highway users, through a gas tax and license fees, to be covering that cost, "rather than the home owners, farm owners and business owners through the property tax."

The deadly collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis in August brought renewed attention to



(Over)



the long-documented gap between demands for transportation funding and the available state funding — a gap that some studies have put at nearly \$2 billion a year. But the key factor in the override was the decision Thursday by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce to support the bill after Democratic leaders agreed to reduce some taxes in the legislation, Morrow and Frederickson said.

The Chamber's support emphasized what business leaders and farmers in rural Minnesota have been saying for years, according to Frederickson. Good highways, which allow raw materials to be shipped in and finished products to be sent efficiently to markets, ranks as highly for manufacturers as reasonable tax rates, a trained work force and adequate housing for workers.

"Absolutely, it's economic development," Frederickson said of the new transportation law.

GOP defectors may face retribution

✓ GOP Minority Leader Marty Seifert of Marshall said his caucus will review staffing and committee positions held by the six Republicans who broke ranks. He said Rep. Rod Hamilton of Mountain Lake resigned as lead

Republican on the Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee before the vote.

The six could also face trouble getting the GOP endorsement in their races for re-election.

—*The Associated Press*

"The DFL majority has done what it does best, which is to raise taxes on Minnesota families.

I'm more than happy to say this is a DFL product and a DFL result with a few Republicans who helped them because I wouldn't want to take any credit for this piece of work."

GOV. TIM PAWLENTY,
on the override of his veto
of the transportation funding bill

How they voted

How local state representatives voted Monday as the House decided to override a veto from Gov. Tim Pawlenty on a transportation measure that would pay for new construction with tax increases. Voting yes were 85 Democrats and 6 Republicans. Voting no were 41 Republicans.

DEMOCRATS VOTING YES

Brynaert (Mankato);
Morrow (St. Peter)

REPUBLICANS VOTING NO

Cornish (Good Thunder);
Finstad (Comfrey); Gunther (Fairmont)

REPUBLICANS NOT VOTING

Brod (New Prague); Ruth (Owatonna)

How local state senators voted Monday as the Senate, on a 47-20 vote, decided to override a veto from Gov. Tim Pawlenty on a transportation measure that would pay for new construction with tax increases. Voting yes were 45 Democrats and 2 Republicans. Voting no were 20 Republicans.

DEMOCRATS VOTING YES

Dahle (Northfield);
Sheran (Mankato)

REPUBLICANS VOTING YES

Frederickson (New Ulm)

REPUBLICANS VOTING NO

Day (Owatonna); Rosen (Fairmont)

—*The Associated Press*

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Frederickson, Finstad: Raising taxes is not solution to budget deficit

By **RON LARSEN**
Journal Staff Writer

ST. PAUL — While Brown County's legislators both found state economists' latest \$935 million budget deficit prediction troubling, they were in accord in feeling that raising taxes is a measure to be avoided.

"At this stage in our budget, the almost \$1 billion deficit is going to be difficult to balance, but it's not an impossible task. It's my anticipation we will balance the budget entirely with spending reductions. I don't hear talk of increasing taxes to balance the budget," **Sen. Dennis Frederickson**, R-New Ulm, said.

"In the tax bill that was passed last year, I believe there were some changes in the corporate income tax code that might bring in some additional revenue where we would be complying with federal changes, but I don't see an increase in sales tax or income tax or any of the broad-based taxes to make up this deficit," Frederickson said.

"I don't think this is the time to be increasing across-the-board taxes for dealing with a deficit when there's a possible recession looming and that job

creation is one of the goals that we are hoping to achieve," Frederickson said.

"Increasing taxes won't solve this problem. In fact, that option should not even be on the table. A budget deficit should signal to legislative leadership that our economy is not working and that our residents are struggling to find jobs and pay the bills. Raising taxes would only worsen the crisis," **Rep. Brad Finstad**, R-Comfrey, said.

"I didn't find the news horribly surprising. The DFL majority was handed a \$2 billion surplus at the beginning of last session when they assumed total control of the Legislature. Instead of being fiscally responsible with this windfall, they spent it as quickly as they could, and today we're seeing the results," Finstad said.

And, it's really only the beginning, Frederickson said.

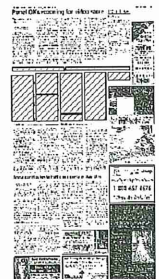
"For the next biennium [2010-11], they're projecting a little over a billion-dollar budget shortfall, and when we balance the budget for this biennium, we need to be very cautious that we don't increase the deficit in the next biennium," he continued.

"The projections in the second biennium are always more variable because of the time that lapses before the biennium occurs. What we would hope is the economy would come out of this recession and go back into a growth mode so we would have additional revenue in the state treasury to fund the necessary programs that we need to fund," Frederickson said.

Frederickson added that he doesn't believe the \$6.6 billion, 10-year transportation bill, which was vetoed by the governor and overridden into law by the Legislature, will be much of a factor as the Legislature tries to whittle down the deficit.

"I think the transportation bill that we passed will be at worst a neutral or no effect, and it might very well have a positive effect because most certainly there is going to be more highway construction because of that bill. There's going to be more construction for transit because of that bill which means there will be more people working to effect those projects."

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Frederickson: Governor's bonding proposal could help area

By **KURT NESBITT**
Journal Staff Writer

NEW ULM — Gov. Tim Pawlenty's bonding bill proposal could benefit some parts of this area, said a local lawmaker.

Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm) said the governor's \$1 billion bonding package, unveiled Monday, includes no special projects for this area.

Because transportation funding is the centerpiece of the proposal, bond money could come to this area, he said.

Frederickson mentioned that nine bridges in Brown County could qualify, along with 24 in Redwood County, 17 in Blue Earth County, nine in Watonwan County, which are on a MnDOT list.

The governor's bond proposal also recommended \$30 million for local road grants, which could help with local road projects, and recommends \$24 million for a new MnDOT regional headquarters in Mankato.

"As far as local projects (across the state) are concerned, there are about three

and a half pages of requests and exactly three got funded. The rest are 'zero,'" Frederickson said.

Frederickson expects the process that will produce the Senate's own bonding bill will begin early in the session and that the Senate bill will "be significantly different than the governor or the House; it always is."

Frederickson serves on the Senate Capital Investment Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Both committees will work on the Sen-

Bonding

Continued on page 7A

ate's bonding bill.

Outside transportation fund-

ing, the governor is proposing \$25.5 million for the Trafton Hall project at Minnesota State University of Mankato as well as money for state parks, although there are no line items.

The senator said he's had informal talks with Brown County officials about highways. He said he will be meeting with them soon to discuss the issue.

He agrees with the emphasis the governor's proposal placed on transportation. However, he has one concern — a lot of work will be done in a short span of time under the governor's proposal. Frederickson said he is wondering if it should be more spread out so contractors have a more consistent workload and counties have a more consistent program.



'As far as local (across the state) projects are concerned, there are about three and a half pages of requests and exactly three got funded.'

Sen. Dennis Frederickson



Area legislators lined up to attend legislative preview Jan. 25 in Marshall

- ✓ MARSHALL — State Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, and
- ✓ Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, will be present and other regional legislators from southwest Minnesota have also been invited to attend a legislative preview scheduled for noon Friday, Jan. 25, at the Lyon County Government Center (Commissioners Room).

The Minnesota Legislature is set to begin the 2008 session on Feb. 12.

Before area legislators head to the Capitol, this is a chance hear what they believe will be the pressing issues to be considered. Also, organizers ask attendees to be prepared to ask questions and share their priority issues with these regional policy makers.

Register by calling the Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce at 532-4484.

Seating is limited; a buffet luncheon will be provided for a nominal fee.



21

Area Dems conclude Town Hall meetings

By KURT NESBITT
Journal Staff Writer

COURTLAND — Two local legislators concluded a series of informal meetings with their constituents Saturday afternoon, as State Rep. Terry Morrow and State Sen. Kathy Sheran held their last "town hall meeting" in Courtland.

The two legislators, both DFLers, had made their way around Nicollet County throughout the week, holding discussions in public libraries and community centers as well as local bars and restaurants beginning on Jan. 19 and ending Saturday.

Morrow and Sheran said they held the meetings to figure out what their constituents are concerned about. They will return to St. Paul for the start of the 2008 legislative session, which begins Feb. 13.

The discussion in Courtland touched on many topics and both legislators shared their views on the issues, sometimes at length. Funding for transportation, the upcoming bonding bill, health insurance, veteran's health issues, a gas tax increase and funding for education.

Sheran and Morrow also offered some personal predictions for the upcoming session. Morrow said he expects an early transportation bill and an early bonding bill as well as early dedication of funding for the outdoors and the state's cultural heritage, such as the arts. Sheran said she predicts further action on CBED legislation as well as movement towards defining a state standard for carbon emission. She said she expects some action on health

care reform and on the selection of Minnesota judges during the session.

Morrow also mentioned that he expects a report on K-12 education finance and that he thinks State Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm) has done excellent work with legislation that affects rivers, such as the Cottonwood River. Sheran added that Frederickson has been "a great mentor" to her. Morrow replied that DFLers and Republicans do work "across the aisle" at the Legislature.

Five people attended the Courtland meeting on Saturday afternoon, which was held at Swany's Pub in the center of that town. Morrow said that other meetings, which were held in Lafayette, North Mankato, St. Peter, Nicollet, Gaylord and Winthrop, had "huge turnouts. It's amazing the things people are talking about."

At the beginning of the Courtland meeting, Morrow, who is from St. Peter, said he thinks that transportation will be the most dominant issue in the upcoming session and that he expects some action on Hwy. 14 as well as the bonding bill.

Morrow said the projected \$965 million bonding bill will include money for a new MnDOT building in Mankato, which DFLers have had on their list 'for 11 years.'

He also mentioned the state's gas tax. He said he thinks the Legislature needs to examine it, since it is one of about four things, including license plate tab fees and proper-

Dems

Continued on page 7A

ty taxes, that pay for roads in the state. He said sales taxes do not pay for roads.

Morrow called Hwy. 14 "the deadliest highway in Minnesota" and passed out a brochure that listed the names of all the people killed on that road since he was elected. He said that if the current funding stays in place, the four-lane expansion project won't be complete until 2030.

Morrow said he expects a 7.5-cent increase in the gas tax along with higher license plate tab fees and registration fees for new vehicles, since the motor vehicle sales tax is already dedicated to roads.

He said Hwy. 14 gets "back on the map" if the transportation package gets passed.

A biology teacher from New Ulm Public Schools, John Olson, mentioned public funding for schools. He said state officials want to promote education, but don't fund it, when technology costs money and when the district is seeing less funding.

Morrow replied by telling Olson that the state has put

\$800 million into education. At \$5,100 per student, districts can't buy computers or lab equipment and that he thinks more state funding is needed "not just because schools need it, but to keep property taxes down."

Morrow asked Olson's son about what he thought of the issue and the young man answered that he thinks the Local Government Aid cuts made in 2003 started the problems that officials are now dealing with.

Discussion also touched on renewable energy. Specifically, the talk centered around ethanol. Morrow said that while corn ethanol "is not going solve all our problems, it gets us thinking in the right direction."

Sheran added that the state can develop an industry around

renewable energy that could bring jobs back to the state. Morrow spoke briefly about railroads, calling the railroads that run through this area "important...because they take trucks off the roads" and reduce emissions and reduce wear and tear on roads.



Can state afford to pass on buying park?

STAR TRIBUNE JAN 13 '08

ALMANAC DOUG SMITH



Minnesota must balance the need to improve its existing state parks with the opportunity it

now faces to buy and develop a new state park on Lake Vermilion, several legislators said last week.

But despite pressing maintenance needs in state parks, the state shouldn't reject the opportunity to buy and develop a new state park on Lake Vermilion — a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity — said DNR Commissioner Mark Holsten.

"We have to make this investment in the future," Holsten said. "It's a no-brainer."

The DNR is negotiating with U.S. Steel Corp. on the purchase price for the 2,500 acres near Tower. The DNR gave legislators an update on future park needs, including about \$140 million in improvements and repairs.

"Can we afford to acquire and develop Vermilion at the same time as we redevelop our park system?" asked Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm.

NW deer hunt ends

The special 16-day deer hunt held in northwestern Minnesota to reduce deer densities because of bovine tuberculosis ends today. About 94 deer had been killed as of Friday, and officials said they expected the final tally to be about 100. Federal sharpshooters will be brought in, probably in early February, to further reduce deer density.

Fishing report: mixed

Anglers continue to contend with slush and less-than-ideal ice conditions on many Minnesota lakes. And the recent warm weather didn't help.

Many ice fishing houses were being pulled off Lake Vermilion as ice conditions worsened, reported conservation officer Dan Starr of Tower. He said fishing was poor, too.

And a truck went through ice on Rainy Lake, though the driver wasn't injured. Near Silver Bay, officer Troy Ter Meer reported the first vehicle observed on area lakes this year was an SUV, which got stuck in the slush on Lax Lake. A vehicle trying to assist then went through the ice.

Meanwhile, ice fishing and snowmobile activity seems to be down from past years in the Walker area, probably because of poor ice conditions, reported officer Gary Summers. The reason for the lack of snowmobile activity is unclear.

Anglers in the Cass Lake area were having mixed success for perch and walleye, reported officer Mark Matthy.

"Trucks were seen on some lakes for the first time; unfortunately it became an expensive fishing trip for some as at least three trucks went partially through the ice," he reported. Ice conditions continue to be variable, and slush remains a problem in some areas.

Anglers were having some success catching walleyes in the Bemidji area. Ice is 14 to 16 inches thick, with water and slush on top, making travel challenging.

Near Grand Marais, slush conditions have improved, though there still are pockets of the stuff. Fishing success of anglers in the BWCA was mixed, reported officer Darin Fagerman.

Fishing has been tough on Lake Mille Lacs, reported officer Greg Verkuilen of Garrison. "Anglers are seeing clouds of small perch, which are keeping the larger fish well fed," he reported.

2008 hunting openers

The DNR announced dates for 2008 hunting seasons. Among them:

- Sept. 1: bear, mourning dove.
- Sept. 6 (tentative): early Canada goose.
- Sept. 13: small game, including ruffed grouse, and archery deer.

Did you know?

- Sept. 20 (tentative): woodcock.
- Oct. 4 (tentative): waterfowl.
- Oct. 11: pheasant.
- Nov. 8: firearms deer.
- Nov. 29: muzzleloader deer.

A Wisconsin-based tree stand manufacturer has agreed to pay a \$420,000 penalty for allegedly failing to immediately report serious injuries to hunters using its Big Foot and Life Foot stands to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Ardissam Inc. of Cumberland, Wis., agreed to pay the penalty but denied the allegations. The company recalled 78,000 tree stands in 2004.

- The National Wild Turkey Federation's 2008 North Star Open turkey-calling contest is Saturday at Thumper Pond Resort in Ottertail, Minn. For information, contact Eugene Crandall at efcrandall@msn.com.

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B

Get ready for Minnesota's first gas tax hike in 20 years after the Legislature voted to override Pawlenty's veto of a \$6.6 billion transportation bill

Brace yourself

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By Rachel E. Stassen-Berger
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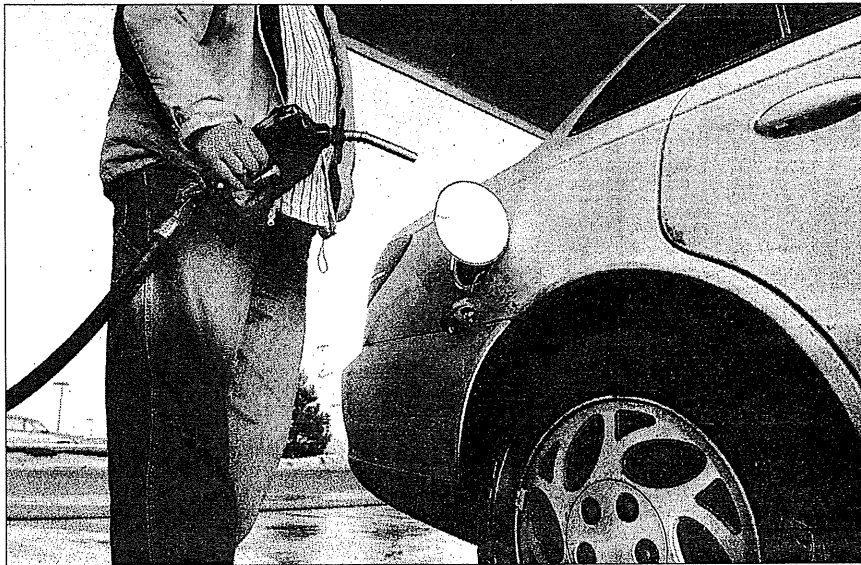
And now, it's done. After a decade of fighting about gasoline taxes, transportation investment and transit improvements, the Minnesota Legislature passed a transportation law Monday, overriding Gov. Jim Pawlenty's veto.

The law ushers in the first gas tax increase in 20 years, increased license tab fees and a new 0.25 percent metro sales tax. It also means \$6.6 billion more over the next decade for roads, bridges, buses and trains.

"Make no mistake about it. We get it. This is a tax increase, and we know that Minnesotans are sensitive to this. They are going to get value out of this gas increase, however," said House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher, after the House's 91-41 vote to override Pawlenty's veto. Ninety votes are needed to override a veto.

The Senate, where support for an override was not in doubt, followed suit and set aside the governor's objections with a 47-20 vote. Democrats control both houses.

Such override votes are rare.



PIONEER PRESS: SCOTT TAKUSHI

Driver Allan Alme says he's already feeling the pinch of rising gas prices. Now, says Alme, who commutes to St. Paul from Baldwin, Wis., the tax increase means he'll have to tighten his belt even further.

GAS TAX, 4A

Gas tax

The Legislature has mustered supermajorities to set aside gubernatorial vetoes only 14 times since 1939, according to the University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Politics and Governance.

Pawlenty, a Republican, is one of five governors in the past seven decades to have the Legislature pass a law over his veto.

"I feel strongly that this was a bad bill. That's why I vetoed it. That's why I was hoping to be sustained," Pawlenty said on a conference call with reporters. He has been in Washington for a National Governors Association meeting since he vetoed the measure Friday.

The governor met with Republican members of the House last week to make his objections clear and ask them to stick with him.

Still, six Republican House members joined all but two Democratic-Farmer-Labor House members Thursday in passing the measure, 89-41.

Pawlenty called at least some of the six House members before Monday's vote to ask them again for their support.

It wasn't enough to sway them.

All six — Reps. Jim Abeler, of Anoka; Kathy Tingelstad, of Andover; Ron Erhardt, of Edina; Rod Hamilton, of Mountain Lake; Bud Heidgerken, of Freeport, and Neil Peterson, of Bloomington — voted for the measure again Monday.

They joined all 85 House DFLers in voting to pass the bill, in the formal words of the procedure, "notwithstanding the objections of the governor."

DFL Reps. John Lesch, of St. Paul, and Mary Ellen Otremba, of Long Prairie — both voted against the bill last week — joined their colleagues in supporting it this week.

For Otremba, who represents a district where nearly a third of the population lives at or near the poverty level and has long opposed gas tax increases, the decision to support the measure came down to some of what she heard over the weekend.

"I think I did the right thing in the end," said Otremba. She heard from farmers and construction workers who supported the bill. She said she hopes the increased state funding for transportation will bring relief to local governments, some of which have raised property taxes to pay for road improvements.

"And I know I was talking to my mom about it and she said, 'Well, you know if it helps our roads, and takes care of some of the property taxes, I can always go get a coupon for five cents,'" she said. "I thought that was really cute."

Republican members who voted for the bill may have to deal with some things that are less cute.

The House Republican caucus will consider reallocating some of those members' staff and removing them from appointed House leadership and committee positions, said House Minority Leader Marty Seifert.

On Monday morning, Seifert said, Hamilton voluntarily resigned his spot as the Republican lead on the House agriculture committee. Other resignations may follow.

"I need to stitch the caucus

Price of plates

Cost of license, tab fees if you bought a new car now and kept it for 11 years	Under current law	Under the new law	Difference
New 2007 Lexus ES 350 for \$33,170*	\$1,392	\$2,413	\$1,021
New 2007 Chevy Silverado for \$23,805*	\$1,263	\$1,768	\$505
New 2007 Honda Civic DX for \$15,810*	\$1,119	\$1,217	\$98
Used 2006 Chevy Impala for \$21,990*	\$947	\$1,356	\$409
Used 2003 Toyota Corolla for \$14,370*	\$529	\$475	-\$54

*Base price

Source: Pioneer Press, USDA and government tax research PIONEER PRESS

AT A GLANCE

The \$6.6 billion law will:

- Increase the current 20 cents-a-gallon gas tax to 22 cents in the spring and to 25 cents Oct. 1; in addition, it will phase in a 3.5 cents-a-gallon surcharge beginning next year. In 2014, the tax and surcharge will be 28.5 cents.

• Levy a quarter-of-a-cent sales tax in the seven-county metro area to finance bus and rail projects. Other counties could impose the tax for specific transportation projects if voters approve.

- Increase motor vehicle license fees for new cars and trucks.

THE FALLOUT

What the transportation override means to:

Gov. Tim Pawlenty:

- It's a blow — no governor wants to have a veto overridden.
- He is only the fifth governor to have a veto overridden since 1939.
- He could not persuade all 49 House Republicans to stick with him.

Lt. Gov. and Transportation Commissioner Carol Molnau:

- Her department will soon have more money to spend and more projects to oversee.
- She may lose her job — legislative leaders have said they would deal with her confirmation once the transportation bill became law.

House Republicans:

- Their 49-member caucus has some repair work to do.
- The six Republicans who voted to override may lose their leadership positions and some of their staff.
- Some of the six may have to

fight for re-election without party support.

House Democrats:

- Their 85-member caucus is united.
- Their leadership was able to build an alliance with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

• They delivered more transportation projects — and tax increases — to Minnesotans.

Minnesota drivers:

- They will pay more at the pump, more to register new cars and more in metro sales taxes.
- They will see more road, bridge and transit improvements.
- Within a decade, they will see replacement or repair of all of the state's most damaged bridges.
- The lowest-income Minnesotans can get a \$25 income tax credit to offset increased gas taxes.

— Rachel E. Stassen-Berger

"I feel strongly that this was a bad bill. That's why I vetoed it. That's why I was hoping to be sustained."

Gov. Tim Pawlenty

together and get back on the same page," said Seifert, who hosted a sandwich-and-chips lunch for GOP members after the vote. "This has been a tough time. There is no doubt about that."

After the vote, Pawlenty, a former House majority leader, seemed supportive of the repercussions.

"If you are going to be a team, you know, then there are going to be some team rules and team expectations, and I'll leave that up to the caucus leaders how they are going to address this further," the governor said.

The six members may also have to run for re-election without support from the Republican Party.

Abeler said he felt extraordinary pressure, particularly from his party, not to vote to override. His endorsement convention, he said, will come in 12 days.

"One day at a time," he said before casting his vote.

Tingelstad, whose endorsement convention was delayed this weekend, said the transportation vote was the toughest

she's taken in her 12-year legislative career because she needed to vote against the governor.

After she took the vote, she said, re-election was not on her mind.

"I'm not worried about that," Tingelstad said. "I just want to do what was right."

But for the majority of Republican members in the House and Senate, voting for the measure — and against the governor — was the wrong move.

Rep. Lynn Wardlow, R-Eagan, told his colleagues of going out to eat, to Sam's Club and to Cub Foods over the weekend. At each stop, someone came up to him to thank him for his "no" vote Thursday.

"What is right? It differs among people," said Wardlow. He again voted "no" Monday.

For all but two Republicans in the Senate — Sens. Steve Dille, of Dassel, and Dennis Frederickson, of New Ulm — "no" was the right answer as well.

Several Senate Republicans urged a vote against the override, focusing on the proposal's impact on people's pocketbooks, or waiting until after an updated state revenue forecast comes out Thursday.

"Can we wait long enough to see whether Minnesotans can afford this?" Sen. Julianne Ortman, R-Chanhassen, asked.

Dennis Lien contributed to this report.