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RENEWABLE FUELS, APPRENTICES

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET, AND MORE

HF906-HF1091

SESSION Weekly

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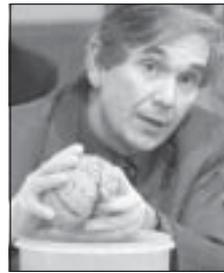
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On the cover: The Capitol dome is reflected in a pool of melting snow March 14 when the temperature exceeded 60 degrees.

— Photo by Andrew Von Bank

Getting an earful

Care providers, those receiving state assistance express concerns about governor's budget for health and human services

BY JEFF JONES

Weeks before Gov. Tim Pawlenty released his proposal for shoring up a projected \$4.2 billion state budget deficit for the upcoming biennium, the House Health and Human Services Finance Committee was hearing testimony about it.

Dubbed "Do More With Less" hearings, committee members heard pleas and suggestions from state agencies, local governments, residents, hospitals, insurance companies, social service providers, and not-for-profit groups of all stripes. Most explained the importance of the services their organization provides and encouraged continued support.

best pinch its pennies from the perspective of the groups it partners with to provide services.

Bradley turned to that pile upon release of Pawlenty's budget plan for fiscal year 2004-05. Health and human services programs are the second biggest piece of the state's spending pie, and with K-12 education funding mostly immune from the budget knife, those programs received the largest spending reductions in the governor's proposal.

Under the plan, the state would save \$1.1 billion, or 12 percent of the projected 2004-05 funding, in the Human Services Department alone, by reducing spending levels and raising fees.

"While a \$3 or \$6 co-payment may not seem like a lot of money to you and me, for people living on very low incomes, it creates a significant barrier," said Sue Abderholden of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, testifying about the effects of new co-payments required from state Medical Assistance clients. "If you had three medications and a doctor's visit, you may be looking at paying 2 to 3 percent of your income per month. On a legislative salary, that would be equivalent to almost \$80 a month," Abderholden said.

Administration officials said the Health and Human Services departments were returning to their role as "safety net" agencies. In a letter to the committee, Human Services Commissioner Kevin Goodno said his department "worked to identify those people who are 'most vulnerable' and services that are 'most critical' to their well being. Anything falling outside this definition was reduced or eliminated in order to preserve these core services."

Some DFLers said they think the sheer volume of cuts is unrealistic.

"Lots of middle class families that have children with disabilities will be summarily hurt by this budget," said Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth). "There's mentally ill people that won't get their pharmaceuticals. 50,000 people are going to lose health insurance. Most of those are working people."

Bradley agrees the governor's numbers are staggering. "I think my caucus likes most of what the governor's done," he said. "But there's some areas where we have trouble and we're doing everything we can to sort of mitigate some of those troubles that we have."

And that's where his five-inch stack of ideas comes in.

"We tried to pull out from those the ideas that really were relevant, ideas that had some merit, had substance to them, that we thought were reasonable, and compiled that into a kind of 'Here's your set of opportunities, go out and engage with the appropriate advocate groups, industry groups or whoever and see what you can come up with.'"

"The system can hopefully be reformed a bit so that when the monies return, which they will, we can return to greener days," said Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka). "Then we can add money back in a better way and it will go even farther and serve better."

Abeler said he hopes to reduce the impact of budget reductions on people with disabilities. He said there is wide disparity among counties in how much funding is provided for



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Lisa Salinas of Eagan testifies about the Consumer Support Grant Program before the House Health and Human Services Policy Committee March 19 as her son, Erik, who has cerebral palsy, looks on.

Many also supplied suggestions on how the cash-strapped state might deliver services more efficiently, provide oversight more effectively, distribute funding more flexibly, and hopefully, save money more easily.

Committee Chair Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester) estimated that after eight hours of hearings, he had a pile of paper five inches thick detailing how state government could

Bills reflecting the administration's proposals were reviewed in the Health and Human Services Policy Committee March 18 and committee members heard several additional hours of public input over the next two days.

Critics called the funding reductions extreme and said the governor was balancing the budget on the backs of some of Minnesota's most vulnerable citizens.

the disabled to receive individualized care.

Under the governor's proposal many nursing homes would pay higher fees to the state and be required to reduce rates or decrease capacity in their facilities. Grant funding for Meals on Wheels and senior dining programs would also be eliminated.

"We are being told to go into next year and either reduce the number of nursing home beds or take a 4 percent reduction (in state funding)," said Barbara Ruppe, a nursing home administrator in St. Paul. With rapidly rising insurance costs, she said, her facility would have to dramatically reduce its staff to make up for the lost funds. "I am concerned that you are asking us to be more efficient, when the best indicator of the type of care residents receive is the actual time direct care staff spend with them."

Plans in the bill regarding the state's welfare system would require anyone applying for the Minnesota Family Investment Program to meet with a job counselor to develop an employment plan. Recipients attending school would be required to work 25 hours a week. Families' cash grants would not increase if they have another child while on the program, under the proposal.

Justine White, a disabled mother of two from Lake Elmo, testified that a cut to welfare recipients who also receive Supplemental Security Income would make it impossible for her to afford her family's rent. "When I hear that the governor wants to take \$175 a month out of my children's MFIP grant because I get SSI, the first thing I thought was, 'How will I take care of my children?' We are barely getting by now. ... That's almost 20 percent of my income."

The proposal would combine the General Assistance Medical Care and MinnesotaCare health insurance programs and would limit subsidized insurance eligibility for single adults to those making less than 75 percent of federal poverty guidelines, which were \$18,100 for a family of four in 2002. Those between 75 percent and 175 percent could pay full price for the same coverage. Parents earning below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines could receive subsidized coverage. Parents making up to 275 percent could pay full price.

Another part of the governor's plan is to reduce state payments to medical providers.

Representatives of Minnesota hospitals said they would have to raise prices for insured patients or shut their doors. Brock Nelson testified that eliminating health coverage for undocumented immigrants alone will cost St. Paul's Region's Hospital \$2.25 million a year when they come in for emergency care.

"When you cut out eligibility, people don't go away," Rep. Huntley said. "They're still going to go to the hospital. They're still going to get health care treatment. It's simply a matter of who pays for it," he said. 🐾



Heavy load

Interim committee investigated misconduct in 1930s Highway Department

Practices in the Minnesota Department of Highways were under close scrutiny by an interim committee appointed in 1939, chaired by Sen. A.O. Sletvold. Shortly after taking office, then-Attorney General J.A.A. Burnquist, who would later become governor, ordered an audit of the department's books as part of an overall investigation of state government.

The department, which became the modern-day Transportation Department, was alleged to be ignoring laws governing construction project practices, abusing political ties in hiring practices, and generally wasting dollars that officials said should be designated for road projects.

According to the committee's report to the 1939 Legislature, "Under past departmental practices, it is often found difficult to place direct responsibility for waste of state funds. Millions of dollars have been paid out without verified or even written claim therefor by the claimant."

The report detailed four areas of concern in the department: personnel, equipment rentals, "emergency" contracts, and purchases.

As far back as 1933, the committee found, the commissioner of the Highway Department had ordered all maintenance and shop employees to receive the local county Farmer-Labor committee's approval in order to retain their jobs. A large number could not gain that approval and were let go, the report said, and they were replaced by those hand-picked by Farmer-Labor committees.

"The engineers could neither hire nor fire without political approval," the report said. "Discipline was a thing of the past and morale was lowered.

"Under this system, it was shown that the department payrolls were heavily overloaded with incumbents who performed no useful service to the state."

According to the report, the payroll for central office maintenance was 122 employees. Six months later, that number was down to 49, which the report indicated was sufficient for full division operations.

Next, the report suggested the department used equipment rental practices to grant construction projects without public bid letting, as required by law. More than

\$3 million was spent on equipment rental alone over a three-year period from 1936 to 1938. Two projects in particular accounted for many of the funds – work along Highway 61 along the North Shore totaling more than \$700,000 and \$311,000 on a Houston County highway.

The practice did not allow for the state to capture federal funds, the report noted, and it left nearly \$2.5 million in unused aid.

The committee also found the department expended nearly \$1 million on "emergency" contracts authorized to the commissioner's discretion in a case requiring immediate action.

Purchases of greater than \$500 were regularly authorized without public bidding processes, as well, according to the investigation. Among those purchases were very large amounts of bituminous road material – enough to patch large segments of highway and for routine maintenance. However, the costs exceeded going rates by more than \$8 per ton – nearly three times the regular rate.

"The last commissioner's scheme of equipment rentals and emergency contracts hereinbefore reported compels conclusions that are inescapable," the report said. "The system was designed to favor, and did largely favor certain individuals. It was carried out in violation of statute. The direct financial loss to the state reached a sum running into millions of dollars, a sum, which cannot here be accurately computed. No laudable purpose can be cited."

Though the report does not specifically name those to blame for the misuse of funds, it does name a number of officials who did not have any participation in the actions. It also suggests that most of the engineers and maintenance personnel did nothing wrong in performing their duties for the department.

However, a number of others headed to court. At the time the report was released, one criminal trial was in progress, several indictments were pending, and 10 civil actions for recovery were underway.

The committee also recommended legislative relief, in the form of limiting when certain powers could be exercised and tightening laws requiring a public bid process.

(M. KIBIGER)

★ **ARTS**

Dollars for art

A plan to limit the amount of money spent on art in state buildings was approved by the House State Government Finance Committee March 18.

In 1983, the Legislature enacted a law that is the basis for the Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places Program. Under the program, state buildings with a construction or renovation appropriation of at least \$500,000 may designate up to 1 percent of the construction budget to the purchase or commission of original artwork.

Sponsored by Rep. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), HF575 would make the appropriation for art be the lesser of \$100,000 or the 1 percent. The bill would not affect any building for which appropriations have been made.

"I'm not opposed to art in buildings," Gerlach said. "I'm just questioning the amount."

He said that under current law the new \$39 million building for the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension allows for \$390,000 in art (\$361,200 has been budgeted), and a new building to house laboratories for the departments of Agriculture and Health with its \$60 million price tag would allow for \$600,000 in art. "This bill is prudent financial management as buildings become more expensive," Gerlach said.

Robert Booker, executive director of the Minnesota State Arts Board, which administers the program with the Department of Administration, spoke against the bill. He said some of the large numbers for art relate to the size of some buildings, like the Judicial Center or the Minnesota History Center, which combined had more \$720,000 allocated for art when they were constructed.

"If this bill passes we would see an art reduction in the largest, most prestigious state buildings," Booker said.

Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park) said some of the 1 percent now allocated could go towards the cost of the building itself. "We can still have art in the buildings," he said. "It's a question of what can we afford."

Gerlach said a similar law in Wisconsin calls for two-tenths of 1 percent of a building's appropriation to go towards art, but the money may become part of that state's budget-balancing solution.

It would be tough to explain to constituents how the state can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on art, while at the same time cutting funding for things like nursing homes,

said Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall).

The bill now moves to the House Capital Investment Committee.

A companion bill (SF910), sponsored by Sen. Claire Robling (R-Jordan), awaits a hearing before the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

★ **BUSINESS**

Consistent penalties

An effort to make uniform the penalties assessed for selling cigarettes and tobacco products to minors was approved March 18, but without a measure that would have required use of electronic age verification machines.

HF561, sponsored by Rep. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), was approved by the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee. It now moves to the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

The bill was amended several times, and drew testimony by convenience store owners who favored it and health professionals who opposed it.

Current law allows cities to exceed state mandated minimum fines for businesses and

clerks found to be selling cigarettes to youth under 18 years old. Also left to local control is the number of days a business's tobacco license may be revoked, should suspension be invoked.

Some cities have imposed fines and license revocation periods so extreme that businesses have lost substantial income, and in some cases have had to close, Gerlach said.

Tom Schlangen, who owns a New Hope convenience store, said the city suspended his license for three days in 1999 following his second compliance check failure. Customers who couldn't buy cigarettes from him took their business elsewhere, which also affected gasoline and car wash sales.

Schlangen said he has lost \$50,000 a year since then because he never regained those customers, who in the convenience store business are creatures of habit.

"These are (the result of) cashier errors," he said. "No one wants to sell to minors."

But allowing cities to impose their own penalties, which are often times more strict than state mandates, has had a proven positive effect on adolescent smoking, said Jean Forester, a University of Minnesota professor.

The bill would impose a \$75 fine for the first violation, a maximum of \$200 for the second violation, and a \$500 fine, a license

FLAG RAISING



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Historical Society textile curator Ann Frisma, *right*, lays a heavily fragmented Civil War flag of the Ninth Minnesota Infantry on a table during a condition examination March 19 of the 21 Civil and Spanish American War flags that are on display in the Capitol Rotunda. Fonda Chomsen, *left*, a specialist in flags and banners of Textile Conservator Associates in Keedysville, Md. assists with with the examination. Capitol Site Manager Carolyn Kompelien, *center*, watches as the curators work.

suspension of up to seven days, or both for a third violation.

An amendment removed a measure that would have required sellers to verify customer age through a driver's license age verification machine. Such machines can retain driver's license information, and therefore constitute an invasion of privacy, said some legislators. The bill does require, however, limited use of information obtained from driver's licenses when retailers choose to use such machines.

The bill does not yet have a Senate companion.

★ CRIME

Reporting, prosecuting identity theft

When Dawn Lewis Anderson realized her credit card information had been stolen, she immediately called the police. But she was told her local police department wouldn't take her complaint because the crime wasn't committed in their jurisdiction. Anderson told a House committee March 13 that without knowing just where or how the information was stolen, she had few places to turn.

A bill approved by the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee would make it easier for victims to report the crime, and prosecutors to charge the perpetrator.

Sponsored by House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen (R-Eden Prairie), HF821 would allow local law enforcement agencies to take reports of identity theft from people living or working within their jurisdiction even if the crime occurred somewhere else. It also permits prosecutors to bring charges against identity thieves in either the county where the theft occurred or the county where the victim lives or works.

Paulsen said his bill would allow flexibility for law enforcement and eliminate a lot of headaches for victims.

Bill Gillespie, executive director of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association, called the bill "something that should have occurred a long time ago." Currently, he said, a person has to return to the place where their identity was stolen to file a police report.

Such reports, he said, are crucial not only for prosecuting crimes, but for victims to receive relief from banks or insurance companies. "A bank or company wants a 7-digit number," he said, referring to the complaint number that is a part of any police report.

Under the bill, reports filed in a county other than where the crime took place would not count towards that county's property crime statistics.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes before the full House.

Tougher penalties

Identity thieves who victimize multiple people would face an increased penalty if a bill heard March 13 by the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee becomes law.

Under HF431, if eight or more people are directly victimized by the information theft, the accused can be sentenced to up to 20 years in prison and face a \$100,000 fine. The same penalty applies if any identity theft crime results in more than \$35,000 in losses to the victims.

"We're going after the ring-type situations," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake). He said his bill sends the message that identity theft is no less important than other theft crimes.

Using another person's identity without permission while committing a crime would be considered an aggravating factor under the bill, and courts would be allowed to add appropriate additional penalties to a sentence.

Another provision would allow courts to impose consecutive sentences for defendants with six or more previous criminal convictions. Meslow said the provision would primarily affect property offenders with a long criminal history.

Because the bill would have a fiscal impact on the state Corrections Department, committee members will consider it for inclusion in the committee's omnibus finance bill.

A Senate companion (SF254), sponsored by Sen. Leo Foley (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits a hearing in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Mail theft punishment

The House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee approved a bill March 13 that would create the crime of mail theft in Minnesota.

Sponsored by Rep. Tom Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul), HF463 would impose a three-year felony sentence and a fine of up to \$5,000 for stealing or opening mail addressed to someone else.

Pugh said it is increasingly common for identity thieves to obtain and use private information contained in letters stolen from mailboxes or post offices. That information can include photographs, ID cards, bank or credit card numbers, medical information, and social security numbers.

"It's an epidemic out there right now," Pugh said.

While already a federal crime, Pugh said federal courts and prosecutors do not have the resources to deal with any but the biggest instances of mail theft. He said the United States Postal Service crafted the language in his bill

and encourages states to pass it in hopes of cracking down on the crime.

"These lower-level crimes need to be dealt with and we don't have a real good venue in the federal courts," Pugh said.

The bill allows Minnesota prosecutors to file mail theft charges in either the county where the theft occurred or the county where the victim lives or works in order to give them more flexibility in prosecuting the crime.

The bill now moves to the House floor. Its Senate companion (SF514), sponsored by Sen. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Making methamphetamine

Accompanying Minnesota's sharp increase in methamphetamine usage is an increase in the number of children being subjected to the dangerous chemicals used to create the illegal drugs, Minnesota law enforcement and health officials told a House committee on March 17.

The methamphetamine labs springing up across the state, especially in rural areas, are dangerous places full of highly reactive substances, causing a risk to anyone near them. And more and more, said Paul Stevens of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, officials investigating such labs are finding children on the premises.

Labs can be set up virtually anywhere. "They're cooking (methamphetamine) in their bathtubs and basements...while children are running free," Flanagan said.

Seeking to deter the trend, the House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee approved a bill (HF652) that would make manufacturing a controlled substance in the same building as a child under age 14 an act of child endangerment, punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. John Lesch (DFL-St. Paul), said prosecutors currently must provide proof that immediate bodily harm is being done to a child before endangerment charges can be filed. But the harmful effects of exposure to the chemicals used in methamphetamine manufacturing are often not immediately evident, he said. In addition, the risk of labs exploding puts anyone nearby in immediate danger.

"These are not geniuses," Stevens said of the drug makers, who tend to be young adults often with young children. He said the bill would enable prosecutors to bring the charges against anyone, not just a parent, who knowingly puts children at risk by bringing them in contact with such dangerous activities.

The bill will next go before the full House. A Senate companion (SF597), sponsored by

Sen. Staveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley), awaits a hearing in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Punishing drug manufacturers

A bill designed to help the state prosecute would-be methamphetamine manufacturers gained the support of House Judiciary Policy and Finance Committee members March 19.

Attorneys and law enforcement officials told lawmakers the dramatic rise in methamphetamine usage and production in Minnesota is becoming a serious health, safety, and environmental risk to many communities, especially in rural areas.

Southern Minnesota counties are being especially hard-hit by an influx of manufacturers crossing the border from Iowa, which has stricter methamphetamine laws, according to Mower County Sheriff Terese Amazi.

HF416, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Anderson (R-Austin), takes a cue from Iowa statutes by making it a felony to attempt to manufacture methamphetamine. Currently, police must catch someone in the act before they can be charged with a felony, Anderson said.

Even if officers discover someone carrying large quantities of chemicals and equipment used to make the drug, current law doesn't give them the authority to act, said Austin Police

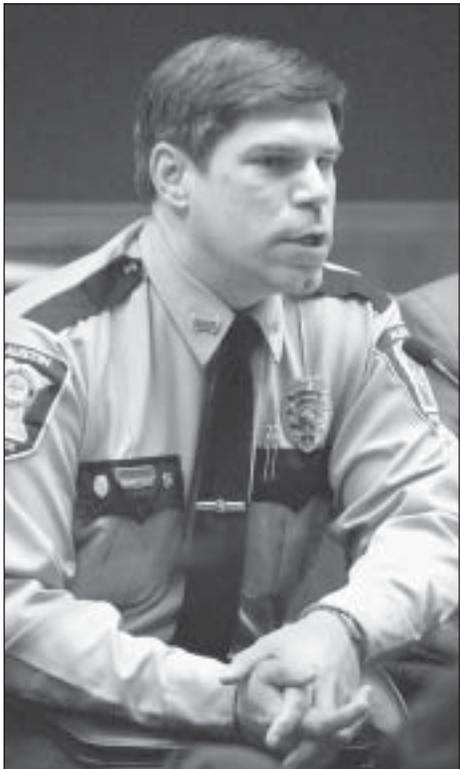


PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Austin Police Chief Paul Phillip testifies in front of the House Judiciary Policy Committee March 19 in support of a bill that would make possessing the items to manufacture methamphetamine with the intent of doing so a crime.

Chief Paul Phillip. "We know what they're doing. They know we know what they're doing. But they also know there's nothing we can do about it," he said.

One of the challenges in combating the problem is that most of the necessary ingredients are readily available to consumers, Phillip said. The bill would create a list of chemicals — from decongestant tablets to sulfuric acid — that are commonly used to make methamphetamine. Someone convicted of carrying one of the listed substances with intent to produce methamphetamine would be eligible for 15 years in prison and a fine up to \$500,000.

The committee expressed support for the bill and will consider it later for possible inclusion in its omnibus finance bill.

The bill's Senate companion (SF500), sponsored by Sen. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls) awaits a hearing in the Senate Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee.

Funds for brain injuries

A bill that would increase the fee charged to individuals seeking to have a driver's license reinstated following incidents of drunken driving, vehicular homicide, or failing a chemical test was heard March 18 by the House Transportation Finance Committee.

The committee will consider the bill for possible inclusion in its omnibus finance bill.

The bill (HF395), sponsored by Rep. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka) would increase the reinstatement fee from \$250 to \$300 and would reallocate proceeds as follows:

- 17 percent to the trunk highway fund,
- 56 percent to the general fund,
- 7 percent in a separate account to the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension for laboratory and investigation related to drug activity and gambling, and
- 20 percent in a separate brain and spinal cord injury account for resources and to maintain a registry.

Under current law, the breakdowns are 20 percent, 56 percent, 8 percent, and 5 percent respectively.

In addition, the bill would provide for the funds in the brain injury account to be divided so that 86 percent be disbursed by the commissioner of health to community-based organizations to provide services and resources to injury victims and their families and so that 14 percent would be used to maintain an injury registry.

A surcharge of \$145 is added to the current \$250 reinstatement fee. As of July 1, that surcharge will increase to \$380.

Tom Gode, executive director of the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota, said brain injuries affect about 12,000 Minnesotans who

are receiving Medicare and Medicaid benefits. He also said that the unique nature of each brain injury makes treating them very expensive. A moderate injury can cost \$3 million per year, while a serious one may cost an estimated \$10 million to \$14 million annually.

Abeler said the brain injury fund began initially as a pilot project with a four-year demonstration grant from the federal government. He also said the individuals causing these injuries are drivers who are breaking the law.

Officials from the Department of Public Safety said that 32,000 driver's licenses were revoked in 2002. Statistics regarding how many are reinstated each year were not available at the meeting.

Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) asked when the additional reinstatement fee would be high enough that the state would lose revenue because it would preclude individuals from actually applying to have their licenses reinstated and would instead drive illegally. She said court officials have approached her suggesting they have struggled to recover those costs.

Rep. Bill Kuisle (R-Rochester), the committee chair, said it's important that the state not lose revenue in the long run because the surcharges are too expensive.

★ EDUCATION

Promoting abstinence

A bill that would require public schools to emphasize sexual abstinence in health education classes was approved March 18 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton), HF580 would amend state law to require that school districts "provide students with a curriculum and instruction in abstinence until marriage premised on risk avoidance." Current law requires a school district's health education program on sexually transmitted infections and diseases to include "helping students abstain from sexual activity until marriage."

"This is taking what's already in the law and emphasizing it," Erickson said. "I'm sending a message here."

The bill was referred to the full House.

During a vigorous debate, opponents and supporters of the bill disagreed on such issues as condom use, whether schools encourage students to be sexually active, and if abstinence programs are an effective method in teaching sex education.

Barbara Anderson, representing the Minnesota Family Council, objected to comprehensive sex education programs in schools with content that, she said, includes "human

reproduction, birth control methods, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual identity, orgasm, and masturbation." She said some programs teach students "how to engage in all sorts of sex acts without guilt."

Bonnie Young Johnson, a health teacher in Eden Prairie, said abstinence "is not ignored or slighted" in school curriculums. She said the bill repeats what already exists in state law and "could lead to omission (of information) rather than giving as much as possible."

An amendment, sponsored by Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) that emphasized prevention of sexually transmitted infections and retained teaching of abstinence but removed the words "until marriage" in existing law, was defeated.

Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) said teens have been sexually active "for ages. You can't teach morality," she said. "You can't legislate morality."

Her bill is not "needless education," Erickson said. "We need to provide students an opportunity to learn to say no."

Rachel Hicks, a senior from Brooklyn Park, said 55 percent of high school seniors in the state are or have been sexually active. Students would "tune out" an abstinence-only message, she said.

A companion Senate bill (SF747), sponsored by Sen. Betsy Wergin (R-Princeton), awaits a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

Charter school sponsors

Local chambers of commerce would be allowed to become sponsors of public charter schools, under a bill approved March 13 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior), the committee chair, HF697 would specifically allow the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce to sponsor the Minnesota Business Academy, a charter high school in St. Paul, effective in the 2003-04 school year.

Joanne Benson, chief education officer of the academy, said the St. Paul School District, the current school sponsor, supports the change. Now in its third year, the 400-student high school emphasizes a business-oriented curriculum. "This will be of great benefit to us," said Benson, who is also a member of the chamber's board of directors.

Chamber President Larry Dowell said if the bill becomes law, "there won't be a rush of local chambers to sponsor schools."

The bill would amend state law to allow nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(6) federal tax status to "sponsor one or more charter schools if the nonprofit corporation has existed for at

least 25 years." State law now allows nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(3) federal tax status and a year-end fund balance of \$2 million to sponsor charter schools. Under the bill, a chamber of commerce organization or a board of trade or exchange would not have to meet the \$2 million financial requirement.

There was no opposition to the bill voiced at the hearing.

Jan Alswager, representing Education Minnesota, the state teachers union, urged legislators to show more caution in expanding charter school sponsorship. "Almost anyone can start a charter school at this point," she said. The Legislature should examine charter schools in total, she added. "What have you learned? What works? What doesn't?"

There are nearly 80 charter schools in the state. They can be sponsored by school boards, intermediate school districts, private and public colleges and universities, community and technical colleges, as well as nonprofit organizations.

The House Education Finance Committee March 19 approved a Sykora amendment that limits a chamber of commerce to sponsoring a charter school that has operated for at least three years. "We can't really afford to start-up any new charter schools," she said.

The finance committee will consider the bill for inclusion in its omnibus finance bill.

The bill's Senate companion (SF611), spon-

sored by Sen. Geoff Michel (R-Edina), awaits a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

Substitute teachers

More of the state's 35,000 retired teachers would be eligible for short-term substitute duty under a bill passed 128-0 by the House March 13.

Sponsored by Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton), HF219 would amend state law to allow retired teachers to substitute for 15-day periods once they are granted "a lifetime qualified short-call substitute teaching license" by the state Board of Teaching.

Erickson said "the perk" in the proposed legislation for retired teachers would be an exemption from required completion of continuing education credits. Only retired teachers granted the proposed lifetime short-call license would be exempt from the requirement. A retired teacher, Erickson holds a lifetime teaching license. She said she would not personally benefit from the bill.

The bill would also allow licensed retired teachers from accredited nonpublic schools to substitute teach on a short-term basis, as well as retired teachers holding an out-of-state teaching license. The bill would begin in the 2003-04 school year.

According to the Department of Children, Families and Learning, about 20,000 of the state's 56,000 teachers will retire in the next 10 years. Finding licensed substitute teachers locally has been a problem for school districts.

The bill's Senate companion (SF491), sponsored by Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrissa), awaits a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

Earlier school start

The school year for Rochester students may start earlier under a bill approved March 18 by the House Education Policy Committee.

Sponsored by Rep. Carla Nelson (R-Rochester), HF535 would permanently exempt the Rochester school district from state restrictions against starting the school year before Sept. 1. The bill was referred to the full House.

The district's current school year is 192 days long, including teacher and staff development days, and extends to June 9, 2003. The bill would permit the local school board to annually adjust the school calendar.

Jerry Williams, superintendent of Rochester Public Schools, said 2,000 of the districts students are involved in school activities prior to the traditional post-Labor Day opening of the school year. Other students who are involved in post-secondary summer school classes have had occasions where college

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Lisa Graham Keegan of the Education Leaders Council answers questions after making a presentation on the federal No Child Left Behind act to the House Education Policy Committee March 20.

classes have already begun while their high school is still in session in the spring.

The Minnesota Association of Innkeepers and the Congress of Minnesota Resorts oppose the bill.

Changing the law for Rochester “has the potential to encompass all schools in Minnesota,” said Mike Wilmer, president of the innkeepers association. That “could be devastating” to the state’s summer resort and tourist industry, he said.

State statutes currently provide only one exception to the Sept. 1 school year start date, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department: if a district has at least a \$400,000 construction or remodeling project that affects use of a school building. On a case-by-case basis, the Legislature has authorized other one-time exemptions from the start date.

A Senate companion bill (SF391), sponsored by Sen. Sheila Kiscaden (IP-Rochester), awaits a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

Indian scholarship office

The House Education Policy Committee approved a bill March 13 that would move the state’s Indian Scholarship Program to the Higher Education Services Office and establish the program’s administrative office in Bemidji.

Sponsored by Rep. Doug Fuller (R-Bemidji), HF509 would transfer the program from the Department of Children, Families and Learning, based in Roseville. The bill was referred to the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee.

Established in 1955, the Indian Scholarship Program has provided an average of 1,000 scholarships per year for American Indian students to attend post-secondary educational institutions. The average student award is \$1,858 per year.

State budget cuts in 2002 led to the closing of the scholarship program’s offices in Bemidji and Duluth. The program had an office in Bemidji since its inception. The Pawlenty administration’s 2004-05 biennium budget proposes \$3.8 million in funding for the program with its administration to remain in Roseville.

Peter White, chairman of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, spoke in favor of the bill. “It was disturbing to me that (Bemidji) was taken away,” he said. “Education should not be subject to politics.” He said 70 percent of the state’s Indian people live within a 60-mile radius of Bemidji State University, which has offered free office space to the state to house the program.

White said his tribal council would also help the state fund the office if it were re-opened in Bemidji. The scholarship program “has impacted a greater number of Indian people than any other program in state history,” White said.

The department would prefer the program stay under its jurisdiction, said Jim Batholomew, the department’s government relations director. “It’s running well,” he said. “We can service the needs of the students.”

Yvonne Novack, the scholarship program manager, said 54 percent of the schools that benefit from the scholarship money are in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. She said one-third of the students receiving scholarships live and attend colleges in the Twin Cities area and one-third attend colleges and post-secondary programs in Bemidji.

According to the Minnesota Indian Education Committee, 667 students receiving scholarships in 2001-02 were from northern Minnesota and 334 were from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

The bill would take effect the day after the governor signs it into law. A Senate companion bill (SF258), sponsored by Sen. Rod Skoe (DFL-Clearbrook), has been approved by one committee and awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

Reducing school board size

The Duluth School Board would shrink in size if a bill passed March 17 by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee becomes law.

Sponsored by Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth), HF494 would reduce the board size from nine to seven members. The bill, which Huntley said would help “reduce the size of government,” now moves to the House floor.

The bill would allow for the district to reduce from five to three the number of at-large members elected every four years. The four other members are elected by district.

The school board would have to approve the provisions of the bill, by resolution, and the change would take effect for the November 2003 election. Residents would not be able to vote on the change.

Speaking on behalf of the district, Ronald Soberg said its very long, narrow, and odd shape could have had something to do with the law in 1969 that required nine members. He said the school district has held several public meetings discussing the reduction, and there has been no response from the public.

Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) expressed concern about the public having no say in the matter, noting the committee is known for “letting the people decide for themselves.”

Huntley said the issue has been in the newspaper, on radio, and on television throughout the area. He said he hasn’t “received one letter or one phone call related to the issue.”

A companion bill (SF577), sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettnner Solon (DFL-Duluth), awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

Single, not double, taxation

Should the owner of a parcel of real estate in two school districts have to pay taxes to both?

A bill approved by the House Education Finance Committee March 18 would provide the owner of a split residential property a procedure to have the parcel declared to be in one school district.

Sponsored by Rep. Barb Goodwin (DFL-Columbia Heights), HF205 was referred to the House Taxes Committee.

Under the bill, a property owner could petition the county auditor to unite the residential property in question into one school district. Currently the county board must be petitioned.

Goodwin said a residential block of homes in her legislative district are split between the boundaries of the Columbia Heights and Fridley school districts. There are a few areas in the state where residential properties are split between school districts, Goodwin said. Rep. Alice Seagren (R-Bloomington), the committee chair, said a similar situation existed in her district.

School district borders don’t necessarily “line up with municipal boundaries,” according to a nonpartisan House Research Department summary of the bill. “In some cases, a house may be split so that some bedrooms are in one school district and other bedrooms are in a different school district,” the summary stated. In such cases, a portion of the house is taxed in one district and the remainder is taxed in the other.

“Developers came in and paid no attention to school district boundaries, that’s how this happened,” Goodwin said. “A homeowner can’t vote in two school districts, but has to pay property taxes to two districts.” There were no testifiers for or against the bill at the committee hearing.

The bill would require the county auditor to issue an order within 60 days of the receipt of the property owner’s petition to transfer the affected parcel into one school district as of the next July 1, and notify the affected districts. The transfer would subject the property to all of the taxes of the new school district.

There is no Senate companion to the bill.

★ ENERGY

Agreement reached

The House Regulated Industries Committee approved a bill March 19 that would allow additional dry cask radioactive waste storage at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant near Red Wing.

Sponsored by Rep. Torrey Westrom

(R-Elbow Lake), HF775 would allow Xcel Energy, the plant's owner, to store spent nuclear fuel rods in at least 11 additional dry cask storage silos on the site.

The bill would alter renewable energy development initiatives mandated by 1994 legislation the state negotiated with Xcel to allow the existing 17 storage casks at Prairie Island. It would also return authorization for additional storage capacity — beyond what the bill would provide — at either Prairie Island or Xcel's Monticello nuclear plant to the Public Utilities Commission.

Xcel said it would have to shut down the Prairie Island plant in 2007 if the Legislature does not approve additional waste storage capacity at the site. The additional storage would keep the plant's two nuclear units operating until federal licenses expire in 2013 and 2014. The bill does not set a limit on the number of storage casks.

Westrom said the bill attempts to balance a number of issues, from meeting the state's energy demand, providing annual funding for a tentative settlement Xcel and the Prairie Island Indian Community has reached on long-standing disputes regarding the plant, to continued funding of renewable energy resource initiatives.

"I think we're going in the wrong direction given the past performance of Xcel," said Rep. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington), who opposed the bill. "This is not a good decision for our state."

The bill would initially fund the proposed settlement between Xcel and the community with \$25 million from a renewable energy development fund created in the 1994 legislation. Xcel collects money for the fund from its ratepayers. Community members are expected to complete a vote on the proposed agreement by April 17. The settlement would provide for a health study of island residents, improve emergency access off the island, and purchase land to relocate residents that want to move.

If approved, the tribal council would not oppose additional dry cask storage at the plant. The multi-million dollar settlement proposes annual funding for the tribe for as long as the Prairie Island plant is operating.

The agreement with Xcel was "not cause for celebration," said Byron White, representing the Prairie Island Tribal Council. "There's no guarantee that nuclear waste will ever be removed from Prairie Island." The tribal council was a third party to a 1994 agreement the Legislature negotiated with the utility.

That issue — the unknown length of time the nuclear storage casks will remain on the island — was cited by dozens of opponents of additional nuclear storage during many days of hearings the committee held on the issue. A

national storage site the Prairie Island nuclear waste would be moved to is not expected to be available for at least 14 years, according to Xcel officials.

The bill was referred to the House Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Committee.

A Senate companion bill (SF794), sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action in the Senate Commerce and Utilities Committee.

Savings plan

A bill making it easier for schools and municipalities to enter into long-term energy savings plans passed the House March 13.

RENEWABLE FUEL



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Dr. Robert Elde, dean of the College of Biological Sciences at the University of Minnesota, demonstrates a working model of a hydrogen generator during a discussion of renewable fuels and emerging technologies during the March 18 House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee meeting.

HF394, sponsored by Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan), was approved 116-11. The bill now moves to the Senate where it is sponsored by Sen. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins).

The bill would extend the maximum length of a guaranteed energy savings contract from 10 years to 15 years. Under a 1983 law, school districts and municipalities can enter into agreements for energy efficiency improvements, such as new lighting and heating and cooling systems. The upgrades are paid from the energy cost savings over a period of time; no upfront cash payment is required. The entity receives the full benefit of lower energy costs after the upgrades have been paid.

Extending the maximum contract length would make it easier for entities to purchase back-up generators, which often can't be paid off in 10 years due to the cost of the machine and the amount of the rate rebate from the utility company.

The bill does not require that contracts be fixed at 15 years; a lesser number of years would be allowed.

In voting against the bill, Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview) and Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul) said they thought that local units of government should not have to wait 15 years to reap the benefits of an energy savings plan.

Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan) said those against it were essentially saying that if benefits can't be realized under current law's 10 years, the cost-savings measure shouldn't be instigated.

Added Rep. Rebecca Otto (DFL-Marine on St. Croix), "I think if we can encourage energy savings that's what we want to do."

Forty-seven states in the nation have similar statutes, with the maximum contract length varying from 10 to 25 years.

★ ENVIRONMENT

Burning permits enter electronic age

Prior to the passage of a burning permit law in 1918, Minnesotans could burn whenever and whatever they wanted. Today, approximately 3,000 volunteer fire wardens together with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry offices issue more than 60,000 burning permits each year at a cost to the state of \$170,000, according DNR figures.

The department would like to change the way burning permits are issued from the current paper method to the same electronic system used to issue hunting and fishing permits.

"We need to move into the modern age," DNR Forestry Division Director Mike Carroll told the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee March 19. "The

change is you lose a little of the neighborhood connectivity, and I've been taking a little heat on that." And, he added, people would have to pay for what once was free.

The department has proposed instituting a tiered fee system:

- \$6 for a one-time burn;
- \$12 for up to four burns annually; and
- \$50 for an expanded use permit.

Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) expressed concern that the new fees might cause people to ignore the permit requirements altogether.

The DNR estimates that fees would generate approximately \$400,000 annually. "Fees will not over-recover costs or build up excess funds," according to a DNR fact sheet submitted to the committee.

It would be a dual system for the first year, Carroll said, meaning permits would still be available from fire wardens and approximately 1,700 electronic licensing vendors would be phased in.

Another benefit to the electronic delivery system, Carroll said, would be that the department could track those issued permits and revoke permits more easily when wildfire risks are high.

The committee did not take any action on the proposal.

★ ETHICS

Process begins

An ethics complaint filed against a House member must have its first hearing by April 2. That was the word from the House Ethics Committee at its March 17 meeting.

The committee met to lay out its rules for the current two-year session. Those rules will be put into action right away to respond to the two-count complaint filed by eight DFLers against Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran) on March 11. It says his conduct "violates accepted norms of House behavior" and "brings the House into dishonor or disrepute."

On the House floor March 10, Lindner reiterated his opinion that gays may not have been persecuted during the Nazi Holocaust. He also is the House sponsor of a bill that would remove sexual orientation as a protected class under the state Human Rights Act.

Lindner did not attend the March 17 meeting.

The next step will be a probable cause hearing, which must occur within 21 days of the receipt of the complaint by the committee chair, Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton). That happened March 12.

After that hearing, if a majority of the four

voting committee members "fails to find the facts more probably true than not" the complaint is dismissed. If that does not occur, a hearing is necessary to obtain and evaluate the evidence for and against discipline and make a final determination. The committee's recommendation for discipline can range from a reprimand to expulsion. The full House ultimately decides a member's punishment. The process needs to be complete by the time members adjourn *sine die* in May 2004.

All materials, proceedings, meetings, hearings, and committee records must be public. However, rules allow for the committee to meet in executive session in three instances: to determine probable cause, to consider a member's health records, or to protect the privacy of a victim or third party.

Committee rules state: "A final committee determination on a complaint shall be held in public except insofar as the committee votes to meet in executive session." There was some discussion, but no consensus, on whether a public meeting must be held to make the vote known. However, as a practice since those rules were first adopted, a final public meeting has been held to release results of closed sessions.

An amendment offered by Rep. Tom Pugh (DFL-South St. Paul), would have made the votes of committee members public. He said that executive session should be "to conduct frank discussions on sensitive issues," and not a place to vote. It was rejected on a 2-2 committee vote.

Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston) expressed concern that he could vote based on what was said in executive session, only to not be able to say why he voted the way he did. "I want to be able to explain my vote," he said.

★ GAME & FISH

Mourning dove season

Minnesota's bird hunters would have a mourning dove season for the first time since 1947, under a bill (HF530) approved by the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee March 18 and sent to the House floor.

A second bill (HF529) that would establish both a mourning dove season and a \$5 mourning dove stamp was approved and referred to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee.

Both measures are sponsored by Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar).

Mourning doves presently are hunted in 37 of the 48 contiguous United States. Minnesota's season likely would be established for September after the birds nest and before they head south for the winter.

The season would allow for a meaningful and rewarding outdoor experience for Minnesota youth, said John Schroers, legislative coordinator for the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance. "Kids and dogs: great combination – you can't beat it."

Mourning dove hunting would add to the approximately \$62 million in retail sales generated annually by upland bird hunters, DNR Wildlife Division Assistant Director Ed Boggess said. Southern and western Minnesota counties would stand to gain the most from the estimated 50,000 hunters who would participate, according to DNR projections.

"This would be totally underpinned on scientific wildlife management framework" and would not affect the mourning dove population levels in the state, Boggess said.

Kevin Ausland, representing the newly established 60-member Dove Sportsman's Society, described dove hunting as a social event similar to the state's walleye opener.

"If we have an abundant renewable resource, let's use it," he said.

Opponents testified that many people consider mourning doves to be songbirds rather than gamebirds and questioned the ethics of shooting birds that yield approximately two ounces of meat.

Howard Goldman, speaking on behalf of Friends of Animals and their Environment, the Humane Society of the United States, and the Fund for Animals, said that of every 10 mourning doves shot during a hunt, three are not retrieved, according to a University of Illinois study.

"Ethical hunters will make every effort to retrieve these birds," countered Lance Ness, a Fish and Wildlife Alliance representative. There are no scientific or biological reasons not to hunt mourning doves, Ness said.

"This is a prelude to hunting," said Linda Hatfield, a wildlife rehabilitator from Minneapolis. "It's an opportunity for hunters to get out in the field in early September and target shoot."

Sen. Pat Pariseau (R-Farmington) awaits action on her companion bills



Representing the Dove Sportsman's Society, Kevin Ausland testifies before the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee March 18 in support of a bill that would create a mourning dove hunting season.

(SF697 and SF698) in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

★ GOVERNMENT

Cost disclosure

A bill that its House sponsor calls a "further reform of the rulemaking process" received House approval March 13.

Sponsored by Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), the bill (HF64/SF61*) passed 128-0.

Under current law when a state agency proposes a rule change it must provide a Statement of Need and Reasonableness to the extent that the agency can ascertain the information, such as what the likely costs will be to make the change and who will bear those costs. Administrative rules enacted by state agencies have the full force of law.

The bill provides that the cost information must specify the portion of the total costs that will be borne by identifiable categories of affected parties, such as separate classes of governmental units, businesses, or individuals.

For example, Seifert said, "If a Department of Health rule comes down in the rulemaking process and they are going to mandate something to our nursing homes, they have to spell that out in the Statement of Need and Reasonableness, or if we have the Department of Agriculture mandating a rule on farmers, they are to identify the probable costs that will be borne by the farmer."

Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls) successfully offered an amendment that would also require the costs or consequences of not adopting the proposed rule be included in a statement.

"The agencies should be able to comply with this quite easily," Seifert said. "I think it's very fair and reasonable."

In the Senate, where Sen. Don Betzold (DFL-Fridley) is the sponsor, the bill was passed 65-0 March 17. If signed by the governor, the measure would take effect July 1, 2003.

★ GREATER MINNESOTA

Foreign trade zones

Establishment of a federal foreign trade zones would be possible in Koochiching County under a bill that allows creation of a port authority there.

HF199, sponsored by Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls), was approved March 13 by the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy Committee. It now moves to the House Transportation Finance Committee.

Koochiching County wants to apply to the federal government for a foreign trade zone, Anderson explained, but discovered that it must first establish a port authority for matters related to its railroad port.

Foreign trade zones are industrial sites located in or near U.S. Customs ports of entry where merchandise is considered legally outside the service's territory. Foreign goods can be shipped to the zone and held duty free for as long as needed. In addition, U.S. quotas do not apply to zone-imported goods. By using the foreign trade zone, a company can assemble a product with foreign parts, store the product in the zone, and postpone duty payments until product sale.

Koochiching County's city of Ranier receives trains each day carrying containers from Canada and points east.

Ranier ranked third behind Detroit and Heron, Mich., for the number of trains and containers entering northern U.S. ports of entry. This is based on a count of 3,332 trains and 27,205 containers during a sample period between October 2001 and August 2002, according to Steve Anderson, administrator for the Greater Metropolitan Foreign Trade Zone Commission.

Anderson said he hopes that companies will have their train-imported products undergo modification or enhancement in the Ranier industrial park, allowing those products to enter duty free.

"That's the purpose of the foreign trade zone," he said. "It's an attempt at economic development ... thus creating jobs."

More than \$250 billion worth of goods falls under zone status in the United States, including more than \$400 million in the Minneapolis-St. Paul foreign trade zone, according to Anderson.

The commission oversees six foreign trade zones in Minnesota, which include the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the Minneapolis Convention Center, 960 acres in the Mid-City Industrial Park in Minneapolis, 13 acres in an Eagan industrial park, and 45 acres in Bloomington. A sixth site, 12 acres in St. Paul, has never been utilized.

HF199 would not apply strictly to Koochiching County. It would expand current law to allow any city, county, town, or other political subdivision in Minnesota to apply for federal foreign trade zone status. Now, only port authorities and economic development authorities may apply.

A Senate companion bill (SF67), sponsored by Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids) awaits a committee hearing.

Research center funding eliminated

A nonprofit research center that examines the myriad of issues unique to rural Minnesota would close if its state funding is eliminated, as proposed in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 budget.

The Center for Rural Policy and Development, located in St. Peter, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit entity. Established in 1997 by the Legislature, it is charged with researching Greater Minnesota social and economic issues, including health care, transportation, housing, crime, and job training.

According to Center President Jack Geller, the Metropolitan Council and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota examine metropolitan area issues. But only the Center for Rural Policy focuses on Greater Minnesota matters.

Minnesota Planning does some rural research, he added. But under a reorganization plan recently ordered by the governor, it will be eliminated and its duties moved to the Department of Administration.

"Who's going to do the research on rural Minnesota?" Geller said. "Who's there?"

The governor's proposed budget eliminates \$150,000 in both fiscal years 2004 and 2005. While a detailed explanation is not provided, Pawlenty's plan says, "The rural policy center does not rely solely on this money for administrative costs or program activity."

"These funds, while modest, are really our foundation," said Geller on March 13 before the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. Foundations and corporations contribute \$150,000 to \$200,000 annually. The committee took no action on the proposal.

The center is unique in that it does not employ researchers. Studies are instead conducted in conjunction with universities and institutes.

According to the center's Web site, in recent years it has issued reports on rural Minnesota Internet use, immigrants in rural Minnesota, employer involvement in affordable housing, resource inequality in public schools, rural health care, and teacher shortages.

Most recently it released an eight-page analysis of tax-free zones and how similar zones work in Michigan and Pennsylvania. A bill (HF3) to establish up to 10 tax-free zones to spur economic growth in Greater Minnesota is making its way through the House this session. The governor favors tax-free zones, and in fact proposed such legislation when he was a state representative.

Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) said without the center legislators would lose the vision necessary to determine what rural issues to focus on.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Faculty concerns

Dr. Tim Ebner carried a bag to the testifier's table and asked if it was OK to use props during his presentation. Once approval was received he pulled out a Tupperware container and put on a pair of latex gloves.

He then opened the lid, reached in, and pulled out a human brain.

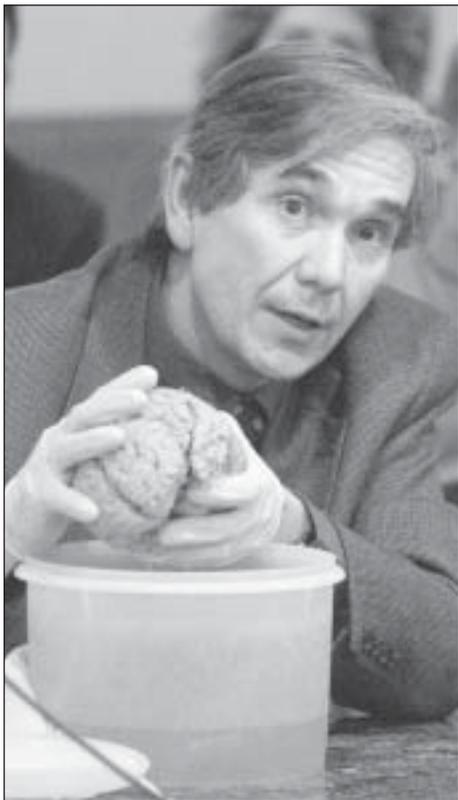
Ebner, chair of the University of Minnesota's Neuroscience Department at the Academic Health Center, was one of six university professors to tell the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 19 about the importance of their work to the state and what would happen as a result of proposed budget cuts.

The committee took no action at the meeting.

In his department, Ebner said students and professors are looking at how different areas of the brain operate, from the basics to the very complex. He said the university is becoming well known in the area of Alzheimer's research.

As a whole, "The medical school has been transformed in recent years and major budget cuts would hurt the trajectory we are on," Ebner said.

It isn't just in the medical areas that the



Dr. Tim Ebner, chair of the Neuroscience Department at the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center, shows a human brain to the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 19 as part of a presentation on what some faculty are doing and the importance of their work to Minnesotans.

university is serving more than just its students.

John S. Adams, a geography professor on the Twin Cities campus, spoke about how he and his students prepared a study that looked at the correlation between patterns of low density development around the state and if traffic volumes on trunk highways near the centers are rising in response to patterns of development around those centers. He said part of their research was used by the Minnesota Department of Transportation for a study on transportation and growth.

"We see our roles as people that need to give back and share our areas of expertise," said Guy Charles, a political science professor on the Twin Cities campus.

Fred Morrison, a law professor at the Twin Cities campus, expressed concern that the budget cuts could mean top faculty members may leave for other universities. He used Charles as an example, saying he has had other offers, "but so far we've been able to keep him here."

He said a proposed biennial wage freeze may keep top professors on campus for a year, but he isn't so sure about two.

MnSCU concerns

Leaders of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system are likely to make some difficult choices in the next few months.

Speaking before the House Higher Education Finance Committee March 13, Chancellor James McCormick said that the 2004-05 biennial budget proposed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty would reduce the system's base by \$174 million. When combined with the money Pawlenty wants to take from the system and put into the state grant program, McCormick said the number increases to \$204 million.

The governor also is proposing a 15 percent cap on tuition increases for MnSCU, unlike the University of Minnesota where the governor is only encouraging that a tuition increase stay within 15 percent.

McCormick said that if MnSCU implements the maximum tuition increase, the system would still be \$34 million short of meeting the \$204 million total. Mary Choate, chair of the MnSCU Board of Trustees, said the board has not decided what the tuition increase would be. If the shortfall were made up all in staff cuts, McCormick said that number would be around 1,900 jobs.

"We will balance our budgets but at the expense of programs that create good jobs and quality of life," McCormick said. He said no decisions have yet been made on cuts.

Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr. (DFL-Winona) said

the committee wants to hear from campus presidents about what cuts they would propose to meet the shortfall.

Not only is McCormick concerned about the short-term future but the state's long-term quality of life as well.

He said that when MnSCU submitted a proposal in January to increase its base by \$107.6 million for the next biennium, included in that amount was \$28.3 million in strategic investments. "We must be responsive to the needs of Minnesotans," he said.

For example, he said the state is now short about 3,000 nurses, a number expected to double by 2008. He said the system now has a waiting list of about 1,000 people waiting to get into a nursing program. Part of the strategic investment would facilitate an increase in the nursing program to produce 440 more registered nurses by 2005. "Without the additional funds we'll not be able to expand as quickly as we hoped in this area."

It was also noted the cuts could hurt the system's part-time students and prevent some students from low-income families from attending college. "We need to be cautious not to underserve the underserved," said Wilson Bradshaw, president of Metropolitan State University.

The committee took no action on the proposal.

HOUSING

Preventing homelessness

A program that aims to prevent homelessness through a number of measures would receive \$2.6 million during the next two fiscal years, under a bill heard March 18.

Sponsored by Rep. Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm), HF541 will be considered for inclusion in the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee's omnibus bill.

The family homeless prevention and assistance program is administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. It received a 2002-03 appropriation of \$7.5 million, of which \$250,000 was one-time funding through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.

The program is a flexible grant program designed to assist families, youth, and individuals who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. The program has three objectives: preventing homelessness; shortening the length of stay in homeless shelters by obtaining safe, affordable housing; and eliminating repeated episodes of homelessness.

In fiscal year 2002, the program gave grants

to 16 coalitions serving 57 counties. This assisted 8,003 households, which includes more than 17,000 children, at an average cost of \$427. The median income of people served was \$7,740, according to the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.

Many individuals and families need financial support provided by the coalitions to help them survive until their unemployment check arrives, said Richard Amos, program manager for St. Stevens Housing Services in Minneapolis.

Amos said he receives phone calls every day from people who have been laid off, who have spent all their savings, and already asked relatives for money. One was a nurse with cancer who was too fatigued to work and therefore couldn't afford housing costs. Others are on the verge of losing their homes due to an inability to pay their mortgage.

"To say 'no' hurts my heart," Amos said, adding that not enough money exists to help all in need.

In rural areas, helping a family stay in its home is crucial as there are often fewer housing opportunities than in a metropolitan area, said Gale McEvoy, representing Three Rivers Community Action and the Southeast Minneapolis Housing Network.

A Senate companion bill (SF196), sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee.

Providing shelter

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) recalls winter solstice as the day homeless people who died in Minnesota were honored in a memorial service.

"It was a very human reminder of why we need the funding," Clark told the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee March 18 in pitching an emergency shelter and transitional housing bill she is sponsoring. The bill (HF272) will be considered for inclusion in the committee's omnibus bill.

HF272 would provide \$3.7 million in 2004-05 for the transitional housing program, and \$1 million for a homeless shelter grant program. The Department of Children, Families and Learning currently administers both, though they will be transferred to the jurisdiction of the newly created workforce development department in July.

The money would replace a one-time appropriation of \$3.7 million that expires June 30. That funding originated when the Legislature dedicated federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to

the transitional housing program for 2002-03.

Clark said the TANF appropriation was known to be a temporary measure. "We have a hole in our safety net that is going to be state-wide," she added.

According to Michael Dahl, executive director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, 1,000 people are turned away each night from shelters. That number would double without further funding, he said. An additional 13,000 people are on the verge of becoming homeless in Minnesota.

Two formerly homeless people testified in support of the bill. Karine and Tony Barnett said they left Chicago and arrived in Minnesota with \$5 and six children. The Stearns County Sheriff's Department directed them to the Housing Coalition of the St. Cloud Area.

"From that point on it's been all uphill," said Tony Barnett.

The family lived in a homeless shelter for five months, then in transitional housing for three months. With the help of the coalition, the couple has secured permanent housing and jobs.

The transitional housing program has proven effective, according to the Department of Children, Families and Learning. Of those who successfully complete the mandatory self-sufficiency component of the program, 95 percent move into independent housing. The average income per participant increases 26 percent at program completion.

A Senate companion bill (SF185), sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee.

LAW



Open meeting law

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee approved a bill March 19 that would allow the commissioner of administration to issue a written opinion regarding the open meeting law.

Rep. Dick Borrell (R-Waverly), the sponsor of HF564, explained that the bill would give "much more access to an average citizen."

If a resident contested the action of a governing body that had a closed meeting, the person could avoid court costs by filing a complaint with the commissioner of administration. The commissioner would then have 20 days to issue an opinion, but that deadline could be extended for one additional 30-day period, if needed. If no opinion is to be issued, the commissioner must say so within five days of receiving the complaint.

There would be a yet-to-be-determined fee

to request an opinion, which Borrell said would be less costly than taking the issue to court. "A fee of \$200 might keep government entities from seeking an opinion," he said.

The commissioner's issuance of an opinion would not be binding. A person could take a complaint to the attorney general if he or she were not satisfied with the commissioner's opinion. Any attorney general's opinion would take precedence over one issued by the commissioner. Borrell stressed the bill doesn't limit a person from taking the issue to court.

Mark Anfinson, an attorney with the Minnesota Newspaper Association, said the bill attempts to create a "simple, cheap, quick mechanism." He said he's dealt with thousands of questions about the open meeting law, and as the law gets more complex, it's "not a good deal for the average citizen."

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) said he was concerned about whether the commissioner of administration was the "proper person to advise a city."

Don Gemberling, director of public information policy and analysis for the Department of Administration, said he's dealt with questions for more than 30 years on the open meeting law because "citizens couldn't get quick answers."

Solberg responded that the law is going to be around a long time after Gemberling would be with the department. Gemberling responded it's up to him to hire and train a person to continue to deal with the open meeting law. If he didn't hire a competent person, he wouldn't be doing his job, he said.

The bill now moves to the House Civil Law Committee.

A Senate companion (SF316), sponsored by Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), awaits action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Legislative removal

A bill removing legislators from membership on commissions or boards with executive powers is headed to the House floor. Sponsored by Rep. Philip Krinkie (R-Shoreview), HF703 was approved by the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee March 18.

Under the bill, the following boards would have to remove legislators: Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, Agriculture Education Leadership Council, Agriculture Utilization Research Institute, St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, Amateur Sports Commission, and the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board.

Krinkie said the bill is necessary because he deems the board to be in conflict with the

Minnesota Constitution's separation of powers provisions.

As an example, he referred to Article 4, Section 5 which states, "No senator or representative shall hold any other office under the authority of the United States or the state of Minnesota, except that of postmaster or of notary public. If elected or appointed to another office, a legislator may resign from the Legislature by tendering his resignation to the governor."

Only boards that have legislators appointed by the Senate, House, or governor, and have executive powers such as directing state monies, would have to remove members.

Krinkie said the situation came to light after examining how the Amateur Sports Commission may have appropriated money not within the legislative intent originally determined for the funds. The commission spends money out of the state's general fund, and operates like an executive agency. The House, Senate, and governor each appoint one member to the commission.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) said the original organization of the commission had no intention of including legislators on the board.

Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Grand Rapids) raised concern with respect to the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board. He said the funds supporting the board are derived from property taxes of the area. He said with one exception of a fund where the board directs the commissioner to spend money, the board only has the power to advise a commissioner of where to spend dollars.

Krinkie said if a board doesn't want legislators removed, then it needs to be made a non-state agency.

The bill has no Senate companion.

★ LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Paying fees

Contractors who win lawsuits against counties, cities, school districts, and other local government units could be awarded attorney fees by the courts, under a bill approved March 18.

HF444, sponsored by Rep. Howard Swenson (R-Nicollet), was approved on a split vote by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee. It now moves to the House Civil Law Committee.

The bill amends the Uniform Municipal Contracting Law, which currently states that when the validity of a municipal contract is challenged that the court shall not award damages or attorney fees, but may award the unsuccessful bidder the costs of preparing an

unsuccessful bid. The bill would still disallow awarding damages, but would allow attorney fees, provided the contractor wins the lawsuit and the court deems that awarding attorney fees is appropriate.

Local government units are required by law to request bids when monetary thresholds are met for the sale or purchase of supplies, materials, and equipment (including rentals), or the construction, alternation, repair, or maintenance of property. State law requires that the lowest responsible bidder be chosen for the job. The word "responsible" allows for consideration of the bidder's work quality.

Dean Thompson, legislative chair of the Minnesota Bar Association's construction law section, said prior to 1997 the law allowed awarding attorney fees. And today attorney fees may be awarded if a bidder successfully sues the state.

But the League of Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota School Boards Association opposed the bill, saying it would lead to an increase in the number of lawsuits.

"We think they have some sort of encouragement to bring these kinds of action," said Tom Deans, legal counsel for the association.

Countered Thompson, "There is absolutely no evidence that this has led to more suits."

Rep. Rebecca Otto (DFL-Marine on the St. Croix) was concerned that the bill would cost taxpayers more money by forcing municipalities to pay attorney fees. And Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) said it's not always clear which bidder is the lowest, as contractors often do not properly complete complicated and lengthy bidding papers.

A Senate companion bill (SF414), sponsored by Sen. Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee.

★ METRO AFFAIRS

Central corridor transit

A bill that would create a transitway for either light-rail or bus transit along the Interstate 94 corridor was heard March 19 by the House Transportation Finance Committee.

HF271, sponsored by Rep. Alice Hausman (DFL-St. Paul), may be considered as part of the committee's bonding recommendations for later this year or the 2004 bonding bill.

The Central Corridor extends along University Avenue from downtown St. Paul, through the University of Minnesota, to downtown Minneapolis. It would connect with the Hiawatha line near the Metrodome. Studies are currently underway in the 11-mile corridor to develop additional transit options, either in the

form of light-rail transit or rapid-bus transit along the corridor to alleviate congestion.

I-94 traffic is anticipated to increase 48 percent by 2020, said Sue Haigh, Ramsey County commissioner. Expansion options and additional bus capacity for I-94 are limited because of its landlocked position.

The corridor is expected to generate 38,000 transit passenger trips per day by 2020, Haigh said, which is higher than anticipated ridership for the Hiawatha corridor when the project was in the final planning stages.

The bill would provide \$2.65 million in bonding funds for capital costs related to transit development in the area, including planning, final environmental impact statements, and preliminary engineering.

The project will require about \$10.6 million for planning and preliminary engineering. That state portion was previously allocated but was cut in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's first round of unallotments. The money is necessary to capture \$8 million in federal money.

Haigh said that preliminary studies estimate a transit option in the area would require \$13.4 million per year to operate – or \$2.8 million more than current options along the University Avenue route.

In addition, studies show a rapid bus transit option would cost \$240 million to develop and light-rail would cost \$840 million. But studies show the bus capacity would be insufficient to alleviate congestion, Haigh said.

Several business leaders from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the neighborhoods along the corridor testified in favor of the bill, saying it provides necessary infrastructure for economic development and viability.

Committee members suggested business and local leaders should consider ways for funding the corridor transit in advance of receiving approval to avoid a funding crunch when it may be finished years down the road, as the state is now facing with the Hiawatha corridor line set to open later this year.

The bill's Senate companion (SF249), sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul) awaits committee action.

Cedar Avenue busway

A bill that would authorize \$5 million in bonds for a bus transitway along Cedar Avenue in the southern Twin Cities metropolitan area was heard by the House Transportation Finance Committee March 19 and will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's bonding recommendations.

The transitway would extend along Cedar Avenue and serve the Mall of America and the communities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, and Lakeville. Specifically, the line would help

NO-HANDS DRIVING



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

MTC bus driver Mark Kitzrow controls the speed of the TechnoBus while surrounded by monitors of a global positioning system and navigational technology steer the bus. After a road is mapped out with a computer, the bus can drive within centimeters of its programmed route without going off course. The House Transportation Policy Committee got a first-hand look and ride March 19 on the bus developed by the University of Minnesota's Intelligent Transportation Systems Institute. The institute developed the TechnoBus to relieve drivers' stress during rush-hour traffic when buses driving on shoulders come within inches of stopped cars.

bring commuters north and south across the Minnesota River and create additional connections for those communities to the metropolitan transit system.

The bill (HF570), sponsored by Rep. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), would provide \$2 million to match federal funds and \$3 million for planning, development, and some station and other improvements.

Gerlach testified that the Legislature provided \$500,000 in 2001 to study the circumstances surrounding a dedicated busway in the area. The Metropolitan Council supported those planning efforts with an additional \$400,000. Gerlach also said Congress has pledged an additional \$1 million to develop the project.

Buses would travel primarily on shoulders and in existing high-occupancy vehicle lanes until a dedicated busway is complete, Gerlach said.

The bill's Senate companion (SF518), sponsored by Sen. Dave Knutson (R-Burnsville) awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Northern metro transit option

A bill that would provide \$1 million in bonding proceeds for a bus transitway in the northeastern metropolitan area was heard March 19 in the House Transportation Finance Committee.

The bill (HF481), sponsored by Rep. Doug Meslow (R-White Bear Lake), will be considered for possible inclusion in the committee's bonding recommendations either for this session or for the 2004 bonding bill.

The Rush Line Corridor Busway would extend 80 miles north along Interstate 35E between St. Paul and Hinckley. The money could be used for right-of-way acquisition, planning, engineering, and matching federal funds, according to the bill.

Meslow testified development in the corridor is part of the Metropolitan Council and the state Department of Transportation long-range plans. By 2020, population in the area is expected to increase by 24 percent, employment by 27 percent, and work trips by 45 percent, Meslow said.

In addition, planners expect traffic in the area to jump 25 percent in that same time period.

"The counties and the communities along the line have come together to try and deal with this" growing congestion issue, said Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt. The line would go through four counties. Currently, bus service to the area is very limited, she said.

Initially the project proposed in the bill allowed for a transitway, which could include buses or rail. The bill was amended in the committee to include a busway only, and to appropriate the

money to the commissioner of transportation, rather than the Metropolitan Council.

The Senate companion (SF619) is sponsored by Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick). It awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee.

★ SAFETY

Emergency communication

Radio communication between law enforcement and safety personnel during a terrorism emergency would be helped under a bill approved March 19.

Under the 2002 state anti-terrorism act, 23 Minnesota counties were given temporary authority to sell bonds to design, construct, and acquire public safety communication system infrastructure and equipment for use on the statewide, shared public safety radio system.

HF756, sponsored by Rep. Jim Rhodes (R-St. Louis Park), would expand the law to give all counties temporary authority to sell bonds to fund the system. It was approved by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee and now advances to the House Taxes Committee.

The updated system is crucial during large, multiple-jurisdiction emergencies. Currently, law enforcement and safety personnel, such as snowplow operators, must communicate through a dispatcher, which is difficult during high radio traffic periods.

"Obviously, in the time we're living in now it's more important than ever," Rhodes said.

Some Twin Cities metropolitan area counties have already updated their equipment under the federal anti-terrorism act, said Brian Erickson, a captain with the Minnesota State Patrol.

"It has worked very well," Erickson said.

In response to a question from Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls), Erickson said the majority of promised federal homeland security funds have yet to arrive. However, planning for the update system continues, he added, as some federal funds are expected.

In last session's bonding bill, \$13 million was allocated for a statewide public safety radio communications system, but former Gov. Jesse Ventura vetoed it.

The bill has no Senate companion.

Allowing more blue lights

A bill that would allow emergency vehicles to display blue lights passed the House 129-0 on March 13.

The bill (HF314), sponsored by Rep. Dale

Walz (R-Brainerd), now moves to the Senate, where it is sponsored by Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point).

Specifically, the bill would allow all emergency vehicles to place flashing blue lights facing toward the front of the vehicle on the passenger side only. Blue lights are currently only allowed on snowplows and transportation maintenance equipment.

"Blue is a much more visible light, especially in inclement weather," Walz said. He also said he didn't know of any opposition to the bill.

During committee discussion earlier in the session, several members questioned whether it would be confusing to motorists if an emergency vehicle used blue lights when they may be accustomed to only seeing plows or maintenance vehicles with blue lights. Walz indicated the motive of the bill was to increase safety, and he didn't anticipate that kind of confusion being a problem.

★ TAXES

Extra filing fee

Tax preparers who continue filing state income tax returns on paper as opposed to electronically would be charged \$5 per claim, under a bill that is in keeping with Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 budget proposal.

The provision is included in HF751, sponsored by Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), chair of the House Taxes Committee. It was presented to the committee March 19 by the Department of Revenue.

Though Abrams is sponsoring the bill, he said he doesn't approve of the tax preparer fee. About 200,000 people using tax preparers still file their claims via the postal service. The fee would likely be passed on by preparers and would therefore be a charge to individuals for filing their taxes, he said.

"I wouldn't be counting on this one," Abrams said, indicating that the provision may not be included in the committee's omnibus bill. However, he acknowledged that removing it would force him to find the budgeted revenue elsewhere.

Since 2000, tax preparers have been required to file returns electronically if they filed more than a certain number of returns the previous year. In 2000, the threshold was 500. It decreased in 2001 to 250, and in 2002 to 100.

However, penalties have not been assessed to preparers who have chosen not to file electronically.

According to the department, it costs \$5 to process a paper claim and \$1.24 to process an electronic claim.

The department estimates the state would

gain \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2004 if the fee becomes law, and \$800,000 in each of the following three years. The measure would take effect for the 2003 tax year, if approved.

Several representatives expressed concern about the fee, including Rep. Jerry Dempsey (R-Red Wing). "This is kind of in a sense a punishment," he said, questioning whether an incentive to file electronically would be more appropriate.

Campaign write-off

Minnesota taxpayers contributing to candidates for state office and to political parties would be on their own to a larger degree if changes to campaign contribution laws are approved.

The changes, proposed in Gov. Tim Pawlenty's 2004-05 budget, drew concern March 19 before the House Taxes Committee.

According to the Department of Revenue, the amount taxpayers could write-off for contributions to state office candidates and political parties under the Political Contribution Refund program would be reduced from 100 percent to 50 percent.

Currently, individuals and married couples can receive a 100 percent cash refund for contributions to candidates for state office and political parties. The maximum refund is \$50 for an individual and \$100 for a married couple.

The Political Contribution Refund costs the state about \$5 million each year. The department is assuming that the number of contributors would drop by one-third if the proposal were adopted. Therefore, it assumes the state cost would decrease to \$2.7 million in fiscal year 2004, and to an average of \$3.2 million in fiscal years 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Revenue Commissioner Dan Salomone said taxpayers in 2000 filed for write-offs for 39,500 individual and 58,500 campaign contributions, for a total state cost of \$5.2 million. In 2001, taxpayers filed for write-offs for 20,900 individual and 55,500 campaign contributions, for a total state cost of \$4.2 million.

Some legislators said reducing the write-off reads like protection for incumbents because it lessens the pool of money for first-time campaigners who aren't as likely to gain big contributions.

"I do think the Legislature will be criticized for protecting incumbents," said Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington).

The governor is also proposing changes to the vehicle by which contributions to the elections campaign fund are made.

Currently, an individual may designate on

his or her state income tax forms that \$5 go to help candidates for state office pay for campaign expenses. The individual decides if the \$5 is for a political party or for the state general campaign fund, which is distributed among candidates of all major political parties. The check-off does not reduce the taxpayer's refund or amount owed.

As proposed, the program would change to a taxpayer-designated amount. Individuals would be allowed to contribute up to \$25 and married couples up to \$50. The amount designated by the taxpayer would be reduced from that individual's refund or be added to the amount owed the state.

The department is assuming that the number of individuals utilizing the check-off would drop by half, should the proposal be adopted. Therefore, instead of the state subsidizing campaigns, it would earn an estimated \$600,000 in each of the next four fiscal years, beginning with 2004.

According to Salomone, the number of individuals utilizing the check-off has dropped from 22.3 percent in 1974 to 8.2 percent in 2002.

The committee took no action on the proposals, but will consider them for inclusion in its overall omnibus bill.

Racing tax break

Auto racing tracks could get a tax break by being eligible for the Minnesota Open Space Property Tax Law, under a bill considered March 19 by the House Taxes Committee.

The committee did not act on the bill, but will consider including it in its overall omnibus bill.

Under HF421, sponsored by Rep. Mark Buesgens (R-Jordan), auto racing would be counted as a recreational use eligible for open space valuation and tax deferral. Current law allows the value of private outdoor recreational open space and parkland to be deferred if its value has increased due to the value of adjacent property, such as residential or commercial land.

Eligible properties continue paying taxes, but do so based on the current market value. The difference between this tax rate and what would be charged under the higher rate is deferred. The deferred taxes constitute a lien on the property. Taxes must be paid when the property no longer qualifies for deferral, and are levied for the last seven years that the property was assessed under the open space law.

The deferral only benefits property when taxes have risen due to the value of neighboring property. For instance, a racetrack in a rural area would not benefit from HF421 if the

value of adjacent land were assessed at a lower rate.

According to Gerald Brandenhoff, an attorney representing Elko Speedway and other privately owned tracks, auto-racing tracks are frequently surrounded by high-end homes "and that tends to unfairly raise the tax."

In the case of Elko, said Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka), the speedway was built "in the middle of nowhere" and has become surrounded by development in the past 30 years.

"It's a significant issue," Brandenhoff said.

There are five asphalt and 10 dirt auto racing tracks in Minnesota.

Recreational uses currently eligible for the open space law include golf, skiing, lawn bowling, croquet, archery, and firearms ranges.

The bill has no Senate companion.

★ TRANSPORTATION

Environmental regulations

Representatives from the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Pollution Control Agency (PCA), and Board of Soil and Water Resources appeared before the House Transportation Finance Committee March 18 to discuss environmental regulations that affect the progress of road construction projects.

County officials testified March 12 regarding what they perceive to be onerous requirements regarding permits and mitigation of environmental concerns. They called for a number of regulations to be changed, but committee members wanted more information from the aforementioned departments regarding why the regulations are in place.

All three agencies testified that efforts have been made to try and streamline the process by which local governments obtain permits for road construction projects.

Tom Balcom, planning director for the Natural Resources Department, said the department has an agreement between a number of agencies, including the state Department of Transportation and the PCA, to get involved in the planning processes for projects early and identify potential problems. Specifically, the department is concerned about instances where projects may affect lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, endangered plant and wildlife species, old-growth forests, and historical and cultural land features.

Agencies at all levels are included in the department's efforts, Balcom said, including the federal government and local units of government.

Leo Raudys, administrator for the state PCA, testified regarding the different water-related issues that may affect transportation projects.

County officials testified that new regulations from the agency are difficult to nail down and seem to be more burdensome than previous regulations placed upon local governments.

Raudys said there are three major areas the agency regulates that transportation projects affect: noise regulations, air quality, and storm water. The latter has been regulated since the early 1990s and affects all kinds of construction projects, including roads, housing developments, and others.

Since the early 1990s, Raudys said, phase I regulations have governed transportation project permits. Though they may be easier to understand, they're fairly restrictive, he said, and don't allow for local governments to use a range of options to deal with the issues. Phase II regulations, he said, are now in effect, and govern industrial, municipal, and construction impacts on storm water.

Though some local governments are initially objecting to changes, Raudys said he thinks they will actually be good in the long run because they allow for more flexibility.

Permits are typically issued 48 hours after applications are received, he said. The agency will only deny a permit if there is a significant problem with the application.

Wetland concerns were addressed by Ron Harnack, executive director of the Board of Soil and Water Resources. Harnack said the board has worked since 1996 to streamline requirements of the state's Wetland Conservation Act. In fact, the board has enacted policies whereby local governments merely need to report the wetlands they need to replace, and the board takes care of facilitating that replacement.

The board works with a number of state and federal agencies to make sure all replacement requirements are met. In essence, locals only have to report to the board for wetland issues, Harnack said. However, former Gov. Jesse Ventura vetoed funding for this year's projects, and Harnack said without some funding, the board will not be able to perform any wetland replacement projects in 2003.

Members were concerned that the agencies are duplicating services and requiring local governments to obtain permits from several agencies, thereby delaying projects and driving up costs.

Balcom said the DNR isn't providing duplicative services, but is merely assuring that all the bases are covered for a particular project.

Activity bus drivers

A bill that would extend a short-term provision regarding drivers of school activity buses now moves to the Senate, after receiving House approval March 13.

On a vote of 127-0, HF259, sponsored by Rep. Bill Kuisle (R-Rochester), would remove the July 1, 2003 sunset date for a 2001 provision regarding who may drive school activity buses. Under the 2001 law, people with class D driver's licenses may drive the special vehicles without a commercial driver's license endorsement under certain criteria.

Those criteria include that they must only drive the vehicles to and from an activity, not operate a bus route, they must pass a background check, they must not have committed certain driving offenses including drunken driving, and must have certified they met the requirements.

The law was initially brought as a way to accommodate coaches, daycare center teachers, and others who had occasion to transport students to and from activities, such as games or field trips, but were not certified as commercial drivers. Generally, a person must have a commercial driver's license to operate the special vehicles, including small buses, 15-passenger vans, and other 10+ passenger vehicles.

In addition, the bill would require drivers of special activity vehicles to meet the requirements that all other school bus drivers are required to meet with regard to criminal backgrounds, particularly certain sex offenses and drug offenses that might not appear on a criminal background check.

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) offered an unsuccessful amendment on the House floor to reinstate the sunset date for the program. She said that given the difficult budget times school districts face, the Legislature should give the law another two-year trial to make sure it meets their needs.

She objected further, saying parents think their children being transported in these vehicles are in the hands of a professional vehicle driver and this bill would not require that.

The additional sunset would serve "just to give a measure of information to the public and to make parents feel a little more secure that it's going to be evaluated," Murphy said.

The Senate sponsor of the measure is Sen. David Gaither (R-Plymouth).

Extending special vehicle life

A bill that would extend the legal life of certain special transportation vehicles passed the full House 129-0 March 13.

The bill (HF348), sponsored by Rep. Tony Kielkucki (R-Lester Prairie), would extend the

If you have Internet access, visit the Legislature's web page at:
<http://www.leg.mn>

usable life for special transportation vehicles from 10 years to 12 years.

The vehicles in question include passenger cars, station wagons, vans, and small buses, generally intended to carry 10 or fewer people including the driver. These vehicles may be used for student transport, but are often maintained by districts to send groups of teachers or small groups to seminars or special events.

Under current law, the life of the vehicle is limited to 10 years, regardless of condition. Kielkucki said the extension would allow districts some flexibility to continue using vehicles that are in good condition and have low miles, though they may be older.

Kielkucki called the bill one step in making it easier for school districts to continue to use vehicles in workable condition, particularly in times when budgets are tight.

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) questioned whether Kielkucki had chosen to increase the useful life of a car in terms of years, rather than using safety evaluations or mileage. He agreed that some vehicles appear in good running condition even when they are 10 years old, but he suggested some of the other standards may help assess the safety of the vehicles better.

"You're right, common sense does tell you to look at the vehicles," Kielkucki said. "The condition of the vehicle is what's important in this process."

The bill now moves to the Senate, where it is sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm).

Brookdale transit hub

A bill that would require the Metropolitan Council to relocate the transit hub adjacent to Brookdale Center in Brooklyn Center will be considered for inclusion in the House Transportation Finance Committee's omnibus finance bill.

The bill (HF511), sponsored by Rep. Debra Hilstrom (DFL-Brooklyn Center), was heard by the committee March 19.

The city has been working to relocate the hub since 1997, when Brookdale Center began discussions to expand and redevelop its existing site between Highway 100, Brooklyn Blvd., and Bass Lake Road, Hilstrom said. Since that time, Brookdale developers have actually evicted Metro Transit from its property, she said, forcing it to build a temporary hub near the mall property.

However, city officials are concerned about the temporary hub because it has created traffic hazards, they say. The buses stop in the traffic lanes, said city manager Mike McCauley, and pedestrians are crossing the street at places other than the intersections. The buses make

it difficult for other motorists to see, force motorists to make right turns from the left-hand lanes, and make left turns from the right-hand lanes because the bus stops are so close to the intersection.

After months of discussion, a site for a new transit hub with shelters and restroom services much like transit hubs in outlying communities was in the works late last fall, Hilstrom said, north of the Brookdale property. However, Metro Transit plans suggested the site was only an alternative and was moving forward with plans for a hub nearer the existing temporary hub, Hilstrom said.

The bill specifically designates the property north of the site as the intended transit hub location – north of Bass Lake Road, east of Shingle Creek Parkway, and west of Highway 100. The bill would also require the hub to be operational by June 1, 2004.

Hilstrom testified that \$4 million has been allocated for the project previously. She is only seeking to designate the site for the hub in her bill.

The Brookdale transit hub provides service to 11 bus routes.

A Senate companion (SF513), sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits committee action.

VETERANS



Renaming a road

The House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy Committee approved a bill March 19 that designates Victory Memorial Drive as a historic district.

Sponsored by Rep. Joe Mullery (DFL-Mpls), HF456 now goes to the House floor.

Bordering Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, the drive established in 1921, is one of the largest World War I memorials in the country.

Originally, 568 elm trees were planted in straight military-style rows in memory of the fallen soldiers from Hennepin County. In 1928, a marker was placed in front of each tree with the name, rank, and company of a soldier. Dutch Elm disease forced some trees to be cut down and replanted.

Barbara Johnson, Minneapolis city councilor for the area, said the drive is eligible for historic preservation grants by designating it a historic district. Mullery said the grant monies would help with the cost of maintenance.

After reading the last stanza of the poem, *In Flanders Fields*, Patricia Schon, past national president of the Department of Minnesota Ladies Auxiliary Veterans of World War I, asked the committee to "take the torch for all our veterans."

There was no opposition to the bill voiced at the meeting.

A Senate companion (SF511), sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action in the Senate Jobs, Housing, and Community Development Committee.

SOLDIER SUPPORT

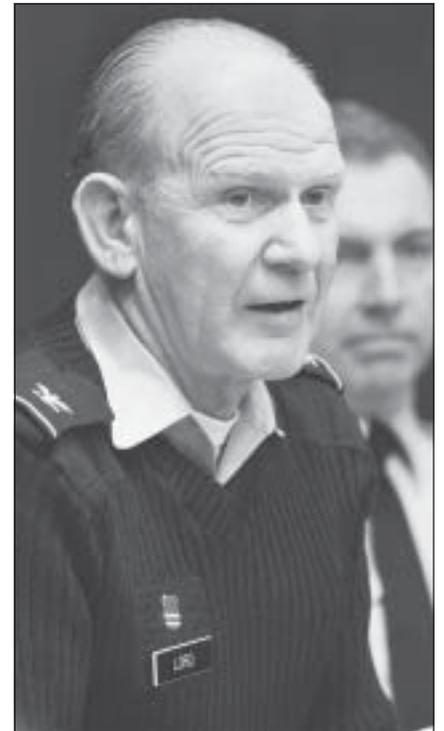


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Col. Dennis Lord, left, of the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs testifies March 20 before the House Ways and Means Committee in support of a proposal that would authorize state employees called to active military service to receive payment of a salary differential. At right is 1st Sgt. William Ash.

Correction

A story in the March 14 issue of *Session Weekly* inadvertently described insurance premiums through the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association as monthly. The premiums listed are quarterly.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

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In the bank

A proposed fee for apprentices would pay for a program that trains dislocated workers for better jobs

By MIRANDA BRYANT

A plan to sustain state oversight of the more than 11,000 construction and occupational apprentices in Minnesota while also helping the unemployed has some lawmakers concerned about competing interests.

Presented March 13 by the Department of Labor and Industry to the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee, the initiative calls for charging apprenticeship sponsors \$50 per apprentice. The revenue would go to the dislocated workers program.

That program helps anyone who has lost work through a massive layoff, has exhausted their unemployment benefits, or has limited opportunities to return to a similar occupation in their region.

The committee took no action on the plan.

The fee, which would generate about \$1 million in the 2004-05 biennium, is part of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposed biennium budget. The goal, said Grace Schwab, director of governmental relations for the Labor and

Industry Department, is to make the apprenticeship program self-sufficient.

But some legislators, as well as labor and union representatives, question the plan, asking whether it would pit one group of workers against another — the apprentices against the unemployed.

"I have a commitment to pay my mortgage, but I don't ask my mortgage company to pay it for me," said Rep. Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm).

Countered Schwab, "The agency is truly committed to the program. ... As you know and remember, Gov. (Jesse) Ventura recommended the program be abolished and that's how we came up with the funding from the workplace development fund. This would be a way it could be self-sustaining, self-supporting."

The state's apprenticeship program began in 1939. Since then, more than 110,000 apprentices have been registered in Minnesota in 105 occupations. Today, apprenticeship programs exist in many occupations, including secretarial, auto repair, printing, and carpentry fields.

An apprenticeship is a formal system that combines on-the-job training with technical instruction. The apprentice and his or her sponsor establish a written contract, which is approved and registered by the state, and specifies the length of training, school hours, skills to be learned, and wage to be received. A sponsor can be an employer, group of employers, public institution, or a union.

Employers and employees benefit. Employers contribute to the pool of available workers and ensure that industry standards are upheld through properly trained employees. Workers benefit by gaining access to career advancing opportunities and higher paying jobs.

The state program is limited to oversight; it does not provide on-the-job training for apprentices. Training is provided either by the employer or by unions, the latter of which includes training expenses in employer-employee negotiations. Millions of dollars are spent by the private sector on training each year, said Dick Anfang, president of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council.

In the 2002-03 biennium, the state funded the apprenticeship program through \$1.4 million from the workforce development fund and a \$72,000 federal grant for veterans becoming apprentices, said Cindy Farrell, the Labor and Industry Department's chief financial officer. The workforce development fund is derived from a per-employee fee charged of all businesses in the state to help the unemployed.

The 2004-05 budget is proposed at slightly more than \$1 million, equating to a biennium reduction of \$406,000.

To manage the cuts, Farrell said, the program would lay off three of its eight employees and bring the program and the labor standards division under one director. An additional \$408,000 would be saved by eliminating the Labor Education and Advancement Program, which helps women and minorities become apprentices. Other operating cuts are also proposed to the workplace service division, which oversees the apprenticeship program.

Several legislators and trade representatives questioned how creating a new fee to help the dislocated workers fund would help the state's general fund.

"The main thing is it doesn't save the general fund any money because it's not funded out of the general fund," said Brad Lehto, legislative director for Minnesota AFL-CIO, in an interview



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Jeff Sawyer, a sheet metal apprentice at Northwest Sheet Metal in St. Paul, welds an elbow joint. The House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee heard testimony March 13 about an initiative that would charge apprenticeship sponsors \$50 per apprentice.

Continued on page 35

Again and again

Renewable fuels could allow state to spend less on energy consumption, economically help parts of Greater Minnesota

BY TOM LONERGAN

From wind power on the Buffalo Ridge to a waste wood cogeneration plant in downtown St. Paul, renewable energy — scattered in small developments throughout the state — is building a promising foundation in Minnesota.

“Renewable energy provides an opportunity to develop an economic base and economic strength in rural Minnesota,” said Greg Cuomo, head of the West Central Research and Outreach Center at the University of Minnesota-Morris.

Cuomo and Robert Elde, dean of the university’s College of Biological Sciences, were among a group of presenters that gave members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Finance Committee a summary March 18 on renewable energy and fuels in the state.

Cuomo said plans are in the works for a renewable energy center that will develop hybrid energy production utilizing wind, biomass, and hydrogen. “Western Minnesota has the resources we need,” he said. The center will be “a living laboratory,” Cuomo said, providing a bridge between university researchers, state residents, and industry to “encourage development of a new energy industry.”

Elde suggested the state “capitalize on indigenous resources” such as biomass in its forests, wind energy in southwest Minnesota, solar power, and hydrogen to “foster development of renewable energy.”

He said such an approach would “help reverse the economic drain” in rural Minnesota and allow the state to keep its energy consumption dollars, “rather than shipping dollars out to Montana and Wyoming for coal.”

The 20th century’s industrial economy, based on fossil fuel-generated energy, was based on “photosynthesis that occurred 50 million years ago,” Elde said. New technologies are emerging, he said, to “convert last summer’s photosynthesis into energy.”

A bill (HF775) approved by the House Regulated Industries committee March 19, which would provide additional nuclear waste storage in the state, also calls for renewable

energy development funds to be used for research on solar, hydrogen, and biomass capabilities. The bill would allow about \$4 million annually from the renewable fund to support research at the University of Minnesota.

As the fourth largest producer of ethanol in the country, the state is poised to use the corn-based fuel additive for other energy resources, according to the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

“Ethanol may be one of the best forms of energy to provide hydrogen used in fuel cell technology,” said Gene Sandager, treasurer of the corn growers group. Fuel cells are the technology of converting hydrogen to electricity without combustion. Using ethanol as the hydrogen source in fuel cell technology, Sandager said, produces electricity and water. “The process creates no other emissions or pollution,” he said.

The state-funded Agricultural Utilization Research Institute evaluates agricultural products and processing co-products as potential renewable fuels. Biomass energy sources are abundant in the state and show great promise as economical sources of renewable energy, said Al Doering, a staff member from the research institute’s Waseca lab. “There is a lot of potential for farmers out there,” he said.

Biomass development has been part of the state’s renewable energy development fund that was established in 1994 legislation allowing nuclear waste dry cask storage at Xcel Energy’s Prairie Island plant. The fund generates \$8.5 million a year from the utility’s ratepayers, based on \$500,000 per each of the 17 dry cask storage units at the plant site.

The Public Utilities Commission must approve renewable energy projects that Xcel

develops with third parties. Two biomass energy projects supported by the fund are expected to begin operating in 2003 and 2004. They are the St. Paul cogeneration plant that will use waste wood to generate 25 megawatts of electricity and the Fibrominn plant in Benson that will utilize approximately 500,000 tons of poultry litter annually to produce 50 megawatts of electricity.

Paul Kramer, vice president of Rahr Malt-ing Co., in Shakopee, told committee members about a biomass-to-energy project his family-owned company is developing. The company has been producing malt from barley since 1847.

By using corn stalks, other crop residue and low value agricultural byproducts, the biomass plant would produce 20 megawatts of electricity — enough power for 8,000 homes, Kramer said. The biomass project would ensure the long-term viability of the company, protect the jobs of 100 people, and increase



PHOTO BY KRISTINE LARSEN

Advocates for renewable resources gathered in the Capitol Rotunda March 19 to discuss the importance of local water planning.

employment by up to 22 jobs, he said. Kramer encouraged the committee to “develop islands of reliable power” across the state.

Developing renewable sources to be part of the state’s energy future will continue to be “very, very challenging,” said Edward Garvey, deputy commissioner of the state Commerce Department.

More than 70 percent of the state’s electricity comes from coal-fired sources, 20 percent is provided by nuclear plants, and the remaining 10 percent is “everything else,” Garvey said. The power source must be reliable, affordable and environmentally sensitive, he said. “The need is very important and worthwhile of exploration.”

Expanding his commitment

DeLaForest moves to new aspect of public service as a state legislator, after years in military service

BY JEFF JONES

Talk of legislators "battling it out" over the state budget, gun control, and other heated issues that come before them doesn't sound



Rep. Chris DeLaForest

quite right to Rep. Chris DeLaForest (R-Andover). The freshman lawmaker served four years in the U.S. Army at Ft. Knox, Ky., and he says images of war shouldn't be applied to the political process.

"In a very real sense, it trivializes the experience of those who have experienced actual combat," he said. "While we deal with very complex and very powerful issues here in the Legislature, it really isn't life or death. At the end of the day, opponents of an issue and proponents of an issue can still shake hands and be friends."

"Politics is a contact sport," he says, "but it definitely is not the same thing as real bullets flying."

DeLaForest sees his job as a legislator as another expression of his commitment to public service and expects his Army background to come in handy in his work here.

"When you're under the kind of stress that military training can force on you, you learn a lot about the human condition and human nature," he said. "And I think that has served me particularly well as a candidate and now hopefully as a legislator in forming the kind of personal relationships that are necessary to be successful."

DeLaForest's political career extends from his college days at St. John's University, where in addition to ROTC programs, he was a member of the College Republicans. His degree is in political science, and after his active duty military service he was campaign manager for Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover). He became a candidate himself when redistricting created an open seat in his area last spring. "Rep. Tingelstad encouraged me to step up to the plate and run," he said.

Transportation tops the list of issues

important to his Anoka County constituents, DeLaForest says. As a member of both the House Transportation Policy and Transportation Finance committees — and a daily commuter — he hopes to steer state funding to road projects in his area to help bring transportation infrastructure up to date.

DeLaForest co-sponsored legislation to repeal the Profile of Learning and he said residents of his district want to ensure quality education while making sure their tax dollars are spent wisely.

He also said he sees himself as an advocate for outdoors enthusiasts in his area. "There are a lot of sportsmen and anglers in Anoka County, myself included. And so we are very interested in ensuring Minnesota remains a

"In a very real sense, it trivializes the experience of those who have experienced actual combat. While we deal with very complex and very powerful issues here in the Legislature, it really isn't life or death. At the end of the day, opponents of an issue and proponents of an issue can still shake hands and be friends."

— Rep. Chris DeLaForest

quality place to enjoy those pursuits," he said.

His job as an attorney specializing in labor relations earned him a seat on the House Civil Law Committee, where he has the distinction of being the committee's vice-chair in only his first term.

"It was a little bit of a surprise to be appointed to Civil Law and it was very much of a surprise to be appointed vice-chair of that committee," he said.

The man in charge of committee assignments, House Speaker Steve Sviggum (R-Kenyon), said DeLaForest has the expertise, talent, and enthusiasm for the job. "I see Chris as being a real leader and up-and-comer within the Republican majority for years to come," Sviggum said.

Already, DeLaForest has had to lead the committee through some contentious issues, including the abortion-related bill that would

require women to receive specific information at least 24-hours before obtaining an abortion. Civil Law Chair Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville) sponsors the bill. "He did a really wonderful job chairing that committee with a very tough issue," Sviggum said.

DeLaForest is sponsoring legislation that would create an anti-terrorism account in the state's budget funded by sales of a special "United We Stand" license plate. Money from the account would go to the state's National Guard and law enforcement units for special anti-terrorism projects and training.

"I'm a veteran, so I have been involved in various anti-terrorism programs on the consumer end of the policy," he said. "Having a dedicated source of revenue to help secure Minnesota's borders and thus America's borders is really one of the foremost priorities of government."

Though he never saw combat during his military service, DeLaForest said he understands the feelings of troops involved in the current conflict in the Middle East. "The people who least want war are soldiers. The

people who are required to carry a rifle into combat hope least that they will be asked to do so," he said. "But America has challenges and guaranteeing our security and guaranteeing peace in the world often entails a price to be paid."

DISTRICT 49A

2002 population: 36,574

Largest city: Andover

County: Anoka

Location: northern Twin Cities suburbs

Top concern: "Anoka County is in desperate need for a real infusion of transportation funding to help bring infrastructure up to 21st century standards."

— Rep. Chris DeLaForest

Desire to serve

Having helped serve people throughout her life, Samuelson is now doing the same in the House of Representatives

By JEFF JONES

Though her life's work has centered on providing care to the elderly, freshman Rep. Char Samuelson (R-New Brighton) is not a stranger to the legislative process.



Rep. Char Samuelson

As an administrator for HealthEast senior care division, she successfully lobbied legislators for a bill to move the company's Bethesda Care Center for senior services to a new location in South St. Paul. As a result of the legislation, she said, the center is doing well and serving the needs of citizens in that area.

Serving people, especially the elderly, has always been at the heart of Samuelson's work. She began her career as a registered nurse at Mounds Park Hospital and worked in chemical dependency centers and nursing homes before returning to school for an administrator's license.

Since then, she has worked for Unicare and HealthEast health systems and after an unsuccessful run for the Legislature in 2000, she began consulting for a variety of clients in the area of long-term care. She currently works for Health Service Innovations, a consulting firm that provides a broad range of services including nursing home administration, senior citizen housing research, executive searches, and interim feasibility studies.

Having worked both one-on-one with patients and as an administrator, Samuelson said she has a hard time deciding which she enjoys more. But all of her work, she says, stems from a desire to serve others. That desire comes from "just a basic concern and care for other people, to try to make a difference — a positive difference in what happens to people."

She sees her new role in the Legislature as another way to continue that mission. She is glad to put her expertise to work on the House Health and Human Services Policy and Fi-

nance committees, and the chair of the finance committee, Rep. Fran Bradley (R-Rochester), says he is glad to have her.

Bradley said that Samuelson brings a strong base of knowledge to the committees and she is quick to learn new concepts and ideas that are crucial to the legislative process. "She's really a gutsy person," Bradley said. "She doesn't shy away at all from jumping into areas that may be controversial. She sees the needs for major reforms."

In thinking through those reforms, Samuelson said she struggles with how government and health care should properly mix.

"I think it's important for government to be involved, and the question is how involved should government be?" she said. "I know that with the demographics the way they are and an influx of older people, we're looking at ways — through insurance or other means — of

"I think it's important for government to be involved, and the question is how involved should government be (in healthcare)?"

— Rep. Char Samuelson

paying for long-term care and services. Because it's very costly."

She said she hopes to explore "good ideas" that may break the traditional model of caring for the elderly such as long-term care insurance, alternative care grants, and elderly waivers that allow people to have services in their homes or assisted living facilities. "We need to look for methods that cost less but still meet the needs of our individuals," she said.

Samuelson describes her committee experience so far as "very good, but very scary."

"The good part of it is, I think we've been educated quite well," she said. The scary part is the decisions committee members will be forced to make about how to reconcile funding for important services with the state's projected budget deficit. "Behind every dollar is a face. We're not dealing with inanimate type objects," she said.

Having been a nine-year member of the

New Brighton City Council, Samuelson is also concerned with proposals to reduce aid to local governments. "Phasing it down I think is definitely the way to do it, rather than just chopping it off," she said.

New Brighton Mayor Steve Larson said he hopes Samuelson and other legislators will find a way to let residents determine the level of services they want from their government. "Char was always a person concerned with the rights of citizens," Larson said.

In her free time, Samuelson enjoys staying active. During the winter months, she enjoys bowling, and in good weather she walks and plays golf. "I'm a horrible, horrible golfer. But I do it anyway," she said.

Most of all, Samuelson and her husband, Gerald, like to travel. She says their favorite destination is the coast of Maine. "We try to go back there as much as possible," she said. "We kind of go back to the same old haunts and do the same things, and just relax."

For now though, the rigors of legislative life occupy her attention full-time. Samuelson says she didn't realize how busy life gets at the Capitol. "You're busy from the time you get here 'til the time you get home. Maybe you can sneak in a lunch or an apple to keep you

going," she said. "But it's productive busy and I think that's real important."

DISTRICT 50B

2002 population: 36,953

Largest City: Fridley

Counties: Anoka, Ramsey

Location: northeastern Twin Cities suburbs

Top Concern: "Health care and community based services, because I think it's very important to have community-based services for our elderly and our disabled."

— Rep. Char Samuelson

Coming home

After living outside of Minnesota during many years of military service, Severson jets into the House of Representatives

By TOM LONERGAN

When Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids) was 9 years old, his brother-in-law took him up in a Cessna 172 for his first plane ride.

"I always wanted to fly," said the 48-year-old freshman House member representing District 14A, north of St. Cloud.



Rep. Dan Severson

After earning a degree in physics from St. Cloud State University, Severson was trained as a Naval officer. Commissioned in 1979 to conduct flight training, he's more than fulfilled his boyhood dream.

During 22 years in the Navy, Severson flew fighter jets as a non-combat pilot, was a squadron leader, and spent three years in Washington D.C. in naval personnel and policy development. The latter experience gave him "a taste for the political structure," Severson said.

Following his retirement from the military in 2000, Severson and his family moved back home to Minnesota. He worked in a business creating new applications for light emitting diodes. Severson still flies regularly, although not during winter. He said he misses "flying fast airplanes and pulling a lot of G's (g-forces)."

In his first run for public office last November, Severson beat his DFL opponent by 315 votes. Last spring, it took 10 ballots for him to gain the Republican endorsement for a newly redistricted House seat over former five-term Rep. Steve Dehler. Redistricting had placed Dehler in the same district as Rep. Doug Stang (R-Cold Spring). Dehler moved so he could run in the new district.

Stang said he and Severson share similar concerns on economic development in central Minnesota, education equity funding, and the area's transportation needs. "Dan worked extremely hard campaigning," Stang said. "I was impressed at how aggressive he was. He's realizing the campaigning doesn't really end. That's going to serve him well."

Small cities such as Rice, St. Stephen, Sartell,

and Sauk Rapids are part of the district that Severson described as, "conservative, strong pro-life, and growing economically." He said he wants to provide "good representation of the conservative values of the district" and "be the voice for economic development."

Minnesota has a tradition as an "innovative, forward-thinking state with a very progressive education system," Severson said. However, he added, the state's "aggressive tax policy" and regulations have placed "constraints on business. We've kind of put the kibosh on economic development."

As a member of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee, he plans to support legislation to create tax free zones for qualifying businesses. In addition,

"We're not seeing business in a friendly way. The state's message to business, he said, is not, 'We're here to help.' It's more like, 'You're honored to be able to operate in our state.'"

— Rep. Dan Severson

Severson said he'd like to see the state relax some other requirements on business such as workers' compensation and unemployment insurance compensation.

"We're not seeing business in a friendly way," Severson said. The state's message to business, he said, "is not, 'We're here to help.' It's more like, 'You're honored to be able to operate in our state.'"

Severson is also a member of the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs and Transportation Policy committees.

"Economic development and transportation are linked," said Severson, who favors a multi-modal approach to transportation planning. "Rail has a place in our future." He supports the development of the Northstar commuter rail line from St. Cloud to Minneapolis. Starting the project "will be tough in this economic environment," Severson said, but the potential economic impact will be "a real positive."

He's the lone sponsor of HF487, which

proposes a 4 percent cut to the salaries of legislators and the state's constitutional officers – governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and state auditor – for 2004-05. Their salaries were increased beginning in 2003 based on provisions in a 2001 law.

Severson said he agreed to sponsor the House companion to a bill (SF220) first introduced by Sen. Dave Kleis (R-St. Cloud), because, "we need to lead by example. My military background taught me to always lead from the front, not behind." Neither bill has had a committee hearing.

Legislators are paid \$31,140 annually, an amount not increased since a 5 percent bump in 1999. Salaries for constitutional officers, except the governor, now range from 65 percent to 95 percent of the governor's \$120,303 salary.

Moving every three years during his military career brought his family closer together, Severson said. His daughter and son attend St. Cloud State University. He met his wife, Cathy Jo, on a blind date arranged by their parents. She's a real estate broker who, Severson said, "put me through college," while working as a

dental assistant in the 1970s.

As he completes his third month in the House, Severson said he enjoys the "personal interface with different people." The best part of the job, he said, is, "I'm finally beginning to feel that I can get on top of what's been going on."

"Probably the hardest thing is trying not to look stupid."

DISTRICT 14A

2002 population: 36,887

Largest city: Sauk Rapids

Counties: Benton, Stearns

Location: central Minnesota

Top concern: "Property values in central Minnesota have increased 93 percent over the past 10 years. The cost of housing for seniors on fixed incomes has skyrocketed as a result. I want to freeze property valuations to allow seniors to be able to stay in their homes."

— Rep. Dan Severson

A fresh perspective

Sieben says her youth is an asset as a new legislator in finding new ways to solve state concerns

By MICHELLE KIBIGER

Given her family tree, it may not be a surprise that Rep. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport) decided to run for the House of Representatives. Her father, Mike, served in the House from 1973 to 1982 and uncle, Harry, was Speaker of the House for several years in the early 1980s.



Rep. Katie Sieben

But Katie Sieben, who was 5 when her father finished his tenure in the House, says she wasn't looking to hold public office. She was enjoying serving the public as a member of U.S. Sen. Mark Dayton's staff.

An open seat presented an opportunity she felt she couldn't let pass her by.

"Running for office wasn't something that was on the forefront of my mind," said Sieben, who celebrates her 26th birthday March 23. "So then when the seat opened up people started talking to me about it, I figured this was a once in a lifetime opportunity where this is an open seat in the town where I'm from."

Sieben has lived her entire life in District 57A, with the exception of a few years away at Colorado College and in Washington, D.C. working for Dayton. She says that knowledge of the district gives her a good perspective on the issues that concern residents.

High among those concerns are education and property taxes.

Constituents perceive that many students are receiving decreased educational opportunities, either because their families can't afford the costs of extra-curricular activities or because of decreased course offerings, she said. It also seems, she said, that the education students are getting in the public schools is not as high quality.

"I'm afraid that the education that I got less than 10 years ago in public schools is not the

same as kids today are being offered," she said.

As for property taxes, Sieben said she's concerned about the affect local government aid cuts may have to three communities in her district: Newport, St. Paul Park, and South St. Paul. She said many of the homes in the area did not benefit as much from property tax relief laws in the past few years, and now their taxes may increase to cover the lost state aid.

"I'm really concerned about property taxes going up," she said. "It's forcing our seniors especially, or people on fixed incomes, out of their homes. So that's something that I want to call attention to and work on proposals that make it more easy for people to stay in their homes and try to mitigate the affects of property tax increases."

Sieben serves on both the House

trying to learn about the tax structure," Marko said. "I really respect and admire somebody who really wants to get in there and learn as much as they can."

Marko also said that Sieben exhibited the ability to connect with people on the campaign trail, particularly because of her age. "One of the best parts was seeing how she could really invigorate the young people at getting involved in politics and relating the importance of that to them," Marko said.

Sieben views her youth as a way to bring a different perspective to the Legislature. She said she and other younger colleagues have the opportunity to look toward the future and determine what they hope the landscape of education, communities, transportation, and other facets of public life will be like for future generations.

"I think being younger," Sieben said, "I can bring a different perspective perhaps just because of when I grew up."

She's also been spending a lot of time reaching out to groups of students and young girls to help interest them in the Legislature and the legislative process. She recently sponsored a

"I can be a voice for the people in my district and speak up about things that I feel are important."

— Rep. Katie Sieben

Transportation Policy and Taxes committees.

From the perspective of a first-term legislator, Sieben is enjoying the experience as a way to learn much more about the legislative process and convey that to her constituents. From her experience in Sen. Dayton's office, she said, she learned that it's key to build good relationships with colleagues to help get things done.

"I can be a voice for the people in my district and speak up about things that I feel are important," she said.

Sen. Sharon Marko (DFL-Cottage Grove), who formerly represented Sieben's district in the House, said she admires Sieben's drive and ambition. New legislators often have a great deal of new information to understand and may not ask to tackle complicated issues such as taxes.

"She's diving in with both feet and really

girls' day at the Capitol.

Said Marko, "I think the young people of Minnesota have a wonderful role model."

DISTRICT 57A

2002 population: 36,710

Largest city: Cottage Grove

Counties: Dakota, Washington

Location: southeastern Twin Cities suburbs

Top concern: "I'm really concerned about property taxes going up. Really, I just see it as a shift onto the community — communities that are least able to afford it are going to bear the brunt of it."

— Rep. Katie Sieben

Monday, March 17

HF906—Holberg (R)
Education Policy
Student survey notice requirements provided.

HF907—Tingelstad (R)
Education Policy
School boards directed to adopt a policy prohibiting intimidation and bullying, and existing harassment and violence policies consistency required.

HF908—Rhodes (R)
Taxes
Hopkins food and beverage sales tax authorized to fund public arts.

HF909—Lipman (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Chain of custody documentation authorized admission in evidence.

HF910—Erickson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Political subdivision employee city and county of residence defined as public information.

HF911—Carlson (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Minneapolis teachers retirement fund association prior service credit purchase authorized for a specified individual.

HF912—Kielkucki (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State soldiers' assistance fund clarified limiting benefits to state residents.

HF913—Ellison (DFL)
Civil Law
Harassment restraining order actions exempted from mandatory alternative dispute resolution requirements.

HF914—Hilty (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State contracts prohibited with tax haven countries.

HF915—Blaine (R)
Education Policy
Dairy and other nutritional product markets enhanced, availability and sale in public schools regulated, and certain contract provisions prohibited between beverage vendors and schools.

HF916—Abeler (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Lead hazard reduction project funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF917—Otremba (DFL)
Civil Law
Marriage dissolution orientation program attendance required.

HF918—Urdahl (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Economic development advisory committee established.

HF919—Kielkucki (R)
Civil Law
Nonprofit corporation residential treatment center, group home, and private child-placing agency liability regulated.

HF920—Fuller (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Corrections Department forensic pathologists authorized to issue death certificates.

HF921—Soderstrom (R)
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Sex offender treatment co-pays authorized.

HF922—Kielkucki (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Public hospital employees exempted from any salary and wage rate freeze.

HF923—Westrom (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Township officer conflict of interest law exception provided.

HF924—Huntley (DFL)
Health & Human Services Finance
Compulsive gambling prevention and education funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF925—Hilty (DFL)
Taxes
Cloquet local sales tax authorized and fund use specified.

HF926—Holberg (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Council service improvement plan authority repealed.

HF927—Wilkin (R)
Transportation Policy
St. Paul segment of I-35E speed limit established.

HF928—Nornes (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Fergus Falls veterans home dementia special care unit addition funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF929—Brod (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Mosquito Control District provisions modified to include the rest of Carver County, property tax levy base restored, per diems eliminated for commissioners, and other conforming changes provided.

HF930—Hilstrom (DFL)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local approval process provided for Metropolitan Council projects for which easements will be acquired by eminent domain.

HF931—Sykora (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Public contracting requirements modified relating to labor organizations.

HF932—Vanderveer (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Property appraisal provided every five years.

HF933—Borrell (R)
Civil Law
County local welfare agency reporting of at-risk newborns provided, and Hennepin County mental health services data sharing authorized in certain circumstances.

HF934—Pelowski (DFL)
Higher Education Finance
Teaching experience evaluation of education faculty at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities required.

HF935—Urdahl (R)
Agriculture Policy
Food rule references clarified, enforcement provisions clarified, and milk storage requirement modified.

HF936—Nelson, C. (R)
Education Policy
Special education pilot program established to exempt school districts from special education mandates beyond those required by federal law.

HF937—Smith (R)
Civil Law
Child support enforcement data classified; and procedure, support enforcement, and funding provisions clarified.

HF938—Sykora (R)
Regulated Industries
Wine off-sale licenses authorized for supermarkets.

HF939—Nelson, C. (R)
Education Policy
English as a Second Language instruction completion certificates provided.

HF940—Kelliher (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Distributed generation cooperatives formation authorized.

HF941—Hausman (DFL)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Off-highway vehicle usage restricted on state land, civil citation authority provided, motorized trail grants-in-aid modified, and money appropriated.

HF942—Stang (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Natural resources and environment projects funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF943—Rhodes (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State finance practices and procedures modified, and state treasurer duties transferred to the commissioner of finance.

HF944—Holberg (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local public notice newspaper designation requirements exception provided.

HF945—Nelson, P. (R)
Civil Law
Washington and Chisago county taxpayer data disclosure sunset extended.

HF946—Johnson, J. (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Insurance guaranty association regulation provided.

HF947—Dempsey (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Red Wing environmental learning center employee eligibility in the public employees retirement association general employees retirement plan clarified.

HF948—Clark (DFL)
Regulated Industries
Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale liquor license to the American Swedish Institute.

HF949—Dorman (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Minnesota Project Innovation grant provided to assist businesses in obtaining federal contracts, and money appropriated.

HF950—Dempsey (R)
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
City or county assessors prohibited from holding additional offices.

HF951—Walker (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Point of purchase debit entries on customer accounts notice and authorization requirements and procedures established, and enforcement actions and remedies provided.

HF952—Kelliher (DFL)
Higher Education Finance
Minneapolis Community and Technical College land acquisition authorized, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF953—Anderson, B. (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Dental assistant licensure created.

HF954—Abrams (R)
Taxes
Public safety radio communication system sales and use tax exemptions provided.

HF955—Solberg (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Counties authorized to have a private certified public accountant examine books, and state auditor audit mandate removed.

HF956—Magnus (R)
Health & Human Services Finance
Veteran's homes fund usage clarified relating to wood shops.

HF957—Borrell (R)
Taxes
St. Michael tax increment financing district creation authorized.

HF958—Krinkie (R)
Regulated Industries
Hydrogen energy economy goal declared, incentive payments for hydrogen production provided, hydrogen energy research and development supported, and fuel cell and motor vehicle excise tax exemption provided.

HF959—Walker (DFL)
Civil Law
Expungement of eviction information provisions modified.

HF960—Walker (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Financial transaction card issuance regulated.

HF961—Smith (R)
Health & Human Services Policy
Human services program hearing procedures established.

HF962—Osterman (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Unfair cigarette sales regulated.

HF963—Dorman (R)
Education Finance
Independent School District No. 500, Southland, disabled access levy extended.

HF964—Beard (R)
Regulated Industries
Cleaner innovative energy sources permanent pilot program established; financial and regulatory incentives, eminent domain, and tax exemptions provided; and customer purchase of power supply services from pilot projects authorized.

HF965—Beard (R)
Transportation Finance
Cities authorized to impose transportation utility fees.

HF966—Davids (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Veterans service office grant procedures modified.

HF967—Swenson (R)
Agriculture Policy
Feedlot upgrade expenditure limits modified.

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HF968—Magnus (R)
Transportation Policy
State highway routes modified, repealed, and vacated.

HF969—Penas (R)
Agriculture Policy
Emergency food embargo authority provided to commissioner of agriculture in times of national security or peacetime emergency.

HF970—Atkins (DFL)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Dakota County senior assisted living facility funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF971—Gerlach (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Government-controlled or owned insurance companies prohibited from transacting business.

HF972—Solberg (DFL)
Taxes
Itasca County local lodging tax authorized, and municipalities within the county prohibited from imposing a separate tax.

HF973—Brod (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Veterans affairs commissioner authorized to access taxpayer identification information to notify veterans of health hazards that might affect them.

HF974—Greiling (DFL)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Waste hauling contracts regulated.

HF975—Jacobson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Local government pay equity responsibilities transferred to the state auditor, and rulemaking and fees authorized.

HF976—Jaros (DFL)
Taxes
School meal sales tax exemption modified.

HF977—Erickson (R)
Education Policy
Minnesota State High School League authorized to determine required pool depth for high school diving in pools constructed before 1995.

HF978—Otremba (DFL)
Agriculture Policy
Country of origin labeling required of certain food products.

HF979—Beard (R)
Regulated Industries
Alternative forms of regulation of telephone companies provisions modified.

HF980—Davids (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Anti-skimming act adopted prohibiting use of electronic scanning devices to capture encoded information from a credit card.

HF981—Holberg (R)
Civil Law
Right-of-way acquisition provided from common interest ownership communities.

HF982—Klinzing (R)
Education Policy
Charter school students allowed to fully participate in extracurricular activities of resident school districts.

HF983—Lenczewski (DFL)
Ways and Means
Inflation accounted for in the revenue forecast.

HF984—Swenson (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Minnesota cooperative associations act adopted authorizing businesses to organize as cooperative associations.

HF985—Westrom (R)
Transportation Policy
Gross weight restriction maximum increased for certain vehicles and combinations on non-interstate trunk highways.

HF986—Zellers (R)
Transportation Finance
Northwest busway connecting Minneapolis to Rogers funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF987—Solberg (DFL)
Transportation Policy
Counties authorized to transfer jurisdiction and ownership of vacated county highways.

HF988—Magnus (R)
Transportation Policy
Railroad lands replacement authorized when needed for a trunk highway.

HF989—Jacobson (R)
Taxes
Roseville tax increment financing district authorized.

- HF990—Howes (R)**
Education Policy
Independent School District No. 2170, Staples-Motley, property detached to form a new school district.
- HF991—Fuller (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Bemidji; Paul Bunyan state trail construction funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF992—Erickson (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Birth records filed for birth resulting in stillbirth.
- HF993—Solberg (DFL)**
Transportation Policy
Counties authorized to designate county highways as cartways.
- HF994—Swenson (R)**
Agriculture Policy
Ethanol development provisions modified.
- HF995—Cox (R)**
Regulated Industries
Notice and plan requirements modified for excavating around utility facilities, emergency exception allowed, and damage report rules required.
- HF996—Wilkin (R)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Automobile no-fault personal injury protection coverage modified, arbitration provisions changed, and insurance fraud reduced.
- HF997—Mullery (DFL)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Plumbers and pipefitters local pension fund exception to restriction on public fund contributions authorized.
- HF998—Kelliher (DFL)**
Transportation Policy
Community preservation route categories established in county and municipal highway and street systems.
- HF999—Olsen, S. (R)**
Higher Education Finance
Regent Candidate Advisory Council of the University of Minnesota membership expanded to include students.
- HF1000—Rhodes (R)**
Transportation Policy
Provisional driver's license use restricted, and all passengers required to use seat belts in vehicle operated by provisional license holder.
- HF1001—Boudreau (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Adverse health care events reporting system established, certain health data classified, and money appropriated.
- HF1002—Solberg (DFL)**
Transportation Finance
Mille Lacs County Highway 169 recreational bridge funding provided, and money appropriated.
- HF1003—Strachan (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Political subdivision compensation limit exclusion provided.
- HF1004—Solberg (DFL)**
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Real property acquisition by exchange authority expanded.
- HF1005—Westerberg (R)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
No-fault personal injury protection automobile coverage amended, health care provider prompt billing incentives provided, and insurance fraud reduced.
- HF1006—Boudreau (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Help America Vote Act conformity provided, complaint process created, and penalty imposed.
- HF1007—Erhardt (R)**
Transportation Policy
Highway 62 treatment as interstate system highway required for purposes of municipal approval.
- HF1008—Zellers (R)**
Transportation Policy
Organ donation choices provided on driver's license application modified.
- HF1009—Rhodes (R)**
Education Finance
Alternative facilities bonding and levy program qualifying criteria modified.
- HF1010—Nelson, M. (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Iraq conflict; support for armed forces in conflict with Iraq and military families in the United States urged by resolution to the president and Congress, and governor called on to declare a day of prayer.
- HF1011—Howes (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Occupational therapists license requirements modified when licenses have lapsed for more than four years.
- HF1012—Osterman (R)**
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Job training program grants provided and money appropriated.
- HF1013—Olson, M. (R)**
Transportation Finance
Public debt allowed for loans for personal rapid transit systems and constitutional amendment proposed.
- HF1014—Olson, M. (R)**
Education Finance
School districts and Department of Children, Families and Learning prohibited from accepting federal or non-governmental grants where the actual costs of implementing the program exceed the amount of the grant.
- HF1015—Rukavina (DFL)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State motor vehicle leasing for the exclusive use of any state official or employee except the governor prohibited.
- HF1016—Wilkin (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Medicare supplement insurance regulated and state law conformity with minimum federal standards provided.
- HF1017—Abrams (R)**
Education Finance
Referendum revenue cap increased by the rate of inflation.
- HF1018—Hackbarth (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Petroleum tank release cleanup fund provisions modified.
- HF1019—Davids (R)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Minnesota No-Fault Automobile Insurance Act applied to horse drawn vehicles and insurance requirements established.
- HF1020—Haas (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Casino authorized to be operated by the state, revenue sharing with Native American governments provided, tax imposed, revenue use specified, on-sale liquor license authorized, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF1021—Lenczewski (DFL)**
Ways & Means
July revenue forecast required.
- HF1022—Eken (DFL)**
Higher Education Finance
Regressive tax, tuition, and fee increases and new regressive taxes or fees prohibited.
- HF1023—Abeler (R)**
Education Finance
School bus emission reduction encouraged and repairs and technologies to protect students from emissions by school districts permitted.
- HF1024—Kuisle (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State contracting and state printing services provisions modified.
- HF1025—Lenczewski (DFL)**
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local government state age eligibility clarified for building components of the region-wide public safety radio and communications system.
- HF1026—Kohls (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Medical assistance capitated payment option authorized for waived services, day training and habilitation services, and intermediate care facility services for persons with mental retardation or a related condition.
- HF1027—Hoppe (R)**
Regulated Industries
Emergency 911 telecommunications provisions modified governing fee submission procedures and audits.
- HF1028—Mullery (DFL)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Tenant applicant screening fee provisions modified.
- HF1029—Lindgren (R)**
Education Policy
Triploid grass carp authorized for aquatic vegetation control.
- HF1030—Otremba (DFL)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Drug and alcohol counselor temporary practice supervision requirements modified.
- HF1031—Otremba (DFL)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Nonpublic assistance IV-D child support services eligibility standard established.
- HF1032—Slawik (DFL)**
Civil Law
Minnesota false claims act adopted.

- HF1033—Abrams (R)**
Taxes
State general tax on commercial-industry property converted to a tax based on land value.
- HF1034—Dill (DFL)**
Taxes
Beaver Bay sales and use tax authorized and fund use specified.
- HF1035—Strachan (R)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
DWI breath-testing instruments provisions modified.
- HF1036—Seifert (R)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Inmate meal frequency provided, and desserts to inmates prohibited.
- HF1037—Ellison (DFL)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Controlled substances offenses modified to include six degrees.
- HF1038—Urdahl (R)**
Education Finance
Hazardous pupil transportation levy authorized.
- HF1039—Davids (R)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Financial institution exam, applications, loans, and organizational provisions regulated, standard non-forfeiture law for individual deferred annuities revised, and obsolete rules repealed.
- HF1040—Wilkin (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Health care nonprofessionals classified as essential employees.
- HF1041—Urdahl (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Reapportionment requirements modified once each 20 years to provide for uninterrupted four-year Senate terms and constitutional amendment proposed.
- HF1042—Wardlow (R)**
Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission name changed to Minnesota Sports and Entertainment Commission, and commission membership modified.
- HF1043—Anderson, B. (R)**
Transportation Policy
Infrastructure certificate funding provided.
- HF1044—Brod (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Health care professional boards costs and penalties relating to disciplinary proceedings clarified and civil penalties provided.
- HF1045—Eastlund (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Support obligations of certain persons called into active military service modified.
- HF1046—Kielkucki (R)**
Education Finance
Minnesota learning resource center funding provided, and money appropriated.
- HF1047—Thao (DFL)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Identifiable minor defined for purposes of the law prohibiting use of minors in sexual performances.
- HF1048—Penas (R)**
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Trade and economic development, Housing Finance Agency, natural resources, and transportation funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF1049—Rhodes (R)**
Education Policy
Student instruction in personal financial management and investment provided.
- HF1050—Zellers (R)**
Transportation Finance
Northwest busway appropriation usage clarified and specified.
- HF1051—Wagenius (DFL)**
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Cumulative environmental impact information review required.
- HF1052—Marquart (DFL)**
Taxes
Personal property tax payment specified before manufactured home title transfer.
- HF1053—Seifert (R)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Double bunking in jails allowed and sheriffs and boards of county and regional jails contracts with private prisons for care, custody, and rehabilitation of jail inmates authorized.
- HF1054—McNamara (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Solid waste plan requirements modified.
- HF1055—Westerberg (R)**
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Residential mortgage originator employee registration required.
- HF1056—Abrams (R)**
Transportation Finance
Metropolitan area transit and paratransit capital expenditure financing provided and bond issuance authorized.
- HF1057—Dempsey (R)**
Taxes
Indian reservation tax revenue state sharing with counties required.
- HF1058—Walz (R)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
Silencing devices for firearms authorized for law enforcement tactical emergency response operations, and obsolete prohibition on sale of slungshot or sand clubs repealed.
- HF1059—Osterman (R)**
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Housing Finance Agency clarifying and technical changes to programs provided, debt ceiling increased, and civil service pilot project extended.
- HF1060—Wagenius (DFL)**
Regulated Industries
Nuclear reactor phaseout and replacement of nuclear energy with alternative sources provided, metropolitan emissions reduction plan acceleration adopted, and conservation improvement funding increased.
- HF1061—Wilkin (R)**
Education Policy
Profile of Learning repealed and replaced; and legislative review of proposed core academic standards in language arts, mathematics, science, history, and geography required.
- HF1062—Abeler (R)**
Higher Education Finance
Tuition increases for public postsecondary education limited.
- HF1063—Abeler (R)**
Higher Education Finance
Higher education state grant calculation changed.
- HF1064—Samuelson (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State employee technical and house-keeping changes provided.
- HF1065—Holberg (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Legislature size specified and legislative and congressional districts coordinated.
- HF1066—Zellers (R)**
Judiciary Policy & Finance
State hazardous materials team provisions modified.
- HF1067—Sykora (R)**
Health & Human Services Policy
Surgical assistant licensure provided, rulemaking authorized, and civil penalties provided.
- HF1068—Lenczewski (DFL)**
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Bloomington; old Cedar Avenue bridge maintenance for hikers and bikers funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF1069—Stang (R)**
Taxes
Benton and Stearns counties aggregate tax exception repealed.
- HF1070—Slawik (DFL)**
Transportation Policy
Road authorities and adopt-a-highway volunteers cooperation encouraged.
- HF1071—Seifert (R)**
Transportation Policy
Paved two-lane highway speed limits of 65 miles per hour during daytime and 55 miles per hour during nighttime provided.
- HF1072—Stang (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Deer tag transfer prohibition exception provided to persons age 65 or over or persons with a permanent physical disability.
- HF1073—Stang (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Lake Koronis state trail funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
- HF1074—Kielkucki (R)**
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Casino authorized in the seven-county metropolitan area by constitutional amendment, tax imposed, and money appropriated.
- HF1075—Eken (DFL)**
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Norman County tax-forfeited land sale authorized.
- HF1076—Cornish (R)**
Environment & Natural Resources Finance
Wildlife management area acquisition funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

HF1077—Hackbarth (R)
Environment & Natural Resources Policy
Off-highway motorcycle registration provisions modified, state forest adopt-a-trail program created, local law enforcement grants provided, Iron Range off-highway vehicle recreation are funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1078—Paymar (DFL)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Help America Vote Act of 2002 voter registration and identification requirements implemented.

HF1079—Lanning (R)
Jobs & Economic Development Finance
Border city enterprise zone additional allocations provided.

HF1080—Brod (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
National Guard tuition reimbursement program extended.

HF1081—Lindgren (R)
Agriculture Policy
Anaplasmosis in cattle testing requirement repealed.

HF1082—Samuelson (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
State auditor outdated language updated, duties modified, and accrued liability determination clarified.

HF1083—Lanning (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Petroleum product specifications updated.

HF1084—Borrell (R)
Civil Law
Federal contracts and agreements data classification provided.

HF1085—Juhnke (DFL)
Health & Human Services Policy
Small environmental laboratory certification requirements established.

HF1086—Smith (R)
Governmental Operations & Veterans Affairs Policy
Teachers Retirement Association and first class city teacher plans military service credit purchase provisions modified, and Internal Revenue Code compliance provided for all retirement plans.

HF1087—Osterman (R)
Commerce, Jobs & Economic Development Policy
Wage and employment data use authorized by agency designated as the performance accountability and consumer information agency.

HF1088—Eken (DFL)
Education Finance
Small school sustainability component of general education aid created, alternative facilities aid eliminated, statewide general property tax growth dedicated, and money appropriated.

HF1089—Marquart (DFL)
Taxes
Citizens' investment and local government excellence program established to encourage citizen input into the budget process, and aids provided to participating cities and counties.

HF1090—Demmer (R)
Agriculture Policy
Plant pest, pest control, and seed laws recodified and clarified.

HF1091—Anderson, B. (R)
Iraq; support for our troops in the war against the Iraqi regime expressed by resolution to the president and Congress, and the governor requested to call for a day of prayer for those who have been called to arms.

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MONDAY, March 24

12:30 PM

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau
Agenda: To be announced.

Higher Education Finance

Room: 300S State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Doug Stang
Agenda: Academic Health Center response to governor's FY04-05 budget.
Witnesses: Dr. Frank Cerra, Senior Vice President, Academic Health Center.
MNLink and Minitex overviews.
Witnesses: Ken Behringer, Executive Director, MnLink; Bill DeJohn, Director, Minitex.

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes
Agenda: HF 646 (Buesgens) Gaming machines provided, and horse racing purse payments established.
HF171 (Lenczewski) Casino; state-operated or state-licensed gambling facility prohibited in a city which has adopted a resolution of disapproval.

3:00 PM

THE HOUSE MEETS IN SESSION

TUESDAY, March 25

8:15 AM

Transportation Finance

Room: 500S State Office Building
Chair: Rep. William Kuisle
Agenda: HF114 (Olsen, S.) Trunk Highway 610 project completion funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
HF848 (Lipman) Trunk Highway 5 safety improvements funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
HF396 (Nelson, P.) North Branch; Trunk Highway 95 bridge construction funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
HF574 (Latz) St. Louis Park Trunk Highway 100 reconstruction and expansion authorized, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
Highway Construction Industry Council needs assessment study.

Environment and Natural Resources

Finance
Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment
Agenda: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources budget.

Jobs and Economic Development Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther
Agenda: HF645 (Paulsen) Technology business licensing provisions modified to provide exemptions from the Minnesota Electrical Act. Electricity Board budget discussion.
HF58 (Severson) St. Stephen municipal water and wastewater systems funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
HF280 (Dempsey) Wabasha; National Eagle Center construction funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.
LEAP Program/Minneapolis Urban League.
Tom Tiller, CEO, Polaris.

Health and Human Services Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Fran Bradley
Agenda: HF212 (Abeler) Health occupations advisory committees extended, including acupuncture, respiratory care practitioner, licensed traditional midwifery, and health professionals services program advisory committees.
HF228 (Knoblach) Nursing facilities designated as metropolitan facilities for purposes of medical assistance reimbursement.
HF595 (Abeler) Supportive housing and managed care pilot project funding provided, and money appropriated.
HF647 (Swenson) Nicollet County nursing home construction moratorium exception provided, and special provisions for moratorium exceptions modified.
HFXXXX (Bradley) Increasing an intergovernmental transfer payment, and increasing the county nursing home payment adjustments.
HF668 (Holberg) Woman's Right to Know Act requiring informed consent of a female upon whom an abortion is performed, and providing civil remedies.

Education Policy

Room: Room 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora
Agenda: HF391 (Olsen, S.) School districts authorized to convert, by election, from election by district to election at-large.
HF906 (Holberg) Student survey notice

requirements provided
HF682 (Kielkucki) School bus safety training, safety responsibilities, and Type III vehicle standards modified.
HF881 (Kielkucki) Minnesota State High School League directed to adopt a policy on corporate sponsorship; and other league budget, investment and review provisions repealed.
HF820 (Buesgens) Area learning center assignments by school districts authorized.
HF822 (Buesgens) Direct judicial review of district exclusion and expulsion decisions allowed.

10:15 AM

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda: HF3 (Magnus) [continued] Tax-free property zones established, exemptions provided for individuals and businesses, state aid and repayment of tax benefits provided, and money appropriated.
HF507 (Hornstein) Clean-fuel vehicles exempted from the motor vehicle sales tax.
HF704 (Brod) Motor vehicle dealers authorized to pay sales tax or use tax for use of a vehicle other than for demonstration purposes, and loaner vehicles exempted from the motor vehicle sales and use tax.
HF733 (Walker) Volunteer assistance delivery to low-income taxpayers facilitation grant money appropriated.
HF809 (Abrams) Direct mail delivery or distribution sales and use tax exemption provided.

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren
Agenda: To be announced.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth
Agenda: HF 775 (Westrom) Radioactive waste management facility definition modified, dry cask storage at Prairie Island facility authorized, and commission approval required for additional storage capacity for spent nuclear fuel.

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Steve Smith
Agenda: To be announced.

12:30 PM

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: HF893 (Howes) Utility vehicle gross weight provisions; sunset removed.

HF722 (Erhardt) Weight restriction exemptions provided for garbage trucks and recycling vehicles.

HF723 (Erhardt) Seat belt law exemption provided for certain garbage trucks.

HF343 (Abeler) Used vehicle dealers sales to other dealers allowed and vehicle donation to individuals by licensed limited used vehicle dealers sales tax exemption provided.

HF795 (Hornstein) Minneapolis to Lakeville I-35W bus rapid transit study required, study advisory committee created and report required.

Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Greg Davids

Agenda: HF852 (Lipman) Motor vehicle retail installment sales regulated.

HF501 (Meslow) Travel clubs regulated.

HF438 (Lindner) Interest rates on rental security deposits provided.

HF894 (Pugh) Manufactured homes certificates of title provisions modified.

HF374 (Sieben) Crib safety definitions provided, sale and commercial use of certain cribs prohibited, and penalties provided.

Agriculture Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Howard Swenson

*** Note: *** Change in Agenda

Bill(s) Added

Agenda: HF414 (Cox) Soil and water conservation district law updates provided.

HF935 (Urdahl) Food rule references clarified, enforcement provisions clarified, and milk storage requirement modified.

HF1081 (Lindgren) Anaplasmosis in cattle testing requirement repealed.

12:30 PM

Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

Agenda: HF769 (Erhardt) Public safety radio communications operators included in definition of essential employee.

HF674 (Latz) Local impact notes for state-mandated actions provisions expanded to include school districts.

HF179 (Jaros) Lawful gambling lawful purpose expenditures modified.

HF183 (Kielkucki) Townships authorized to regulate and impose investigation fees on lawful gambling organizations.

HF360 (Lenczewski) Lawful gambling expenditures authorized for utility buildings used as primary headquarters for certain fraternal organizations.

HF619 (Rhodes) Sports board gambling authorized.

HF620 (Kielkucki) Social dice game conduct provisions clarified.

HF642 (Stang) Fantasy sports leagues authorized at retail establishments licensed to sell alcoholic beverages.

HF734 (Kielkucki) Linked bingo gaming provided.

HF807 (Seifert) Campaign materials prohibited from containing distorted photographs of candidates.

HF791 (Kielkucki) Election requirements and procedures modified.

Additional bills may be added.

2:30 PM

Civil Law

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: HF739 (Borrell) Certain University of Minnesota claim data and food safety regulatory data classified as nonpublic.

HF700 (Eastlund) Civil action immunity provided for good faith reports to or requests for assistance from law enforcement.

HF628 (Kohls) Emergency notification actions liability limitation provided.

HF707 (Thao) Hmong marriage solemnization form provided.

Regulated Industries

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: HF588 (Brod) Township authority granted to require natural gas utilities to obtain a franchise from the township.

HF860 (Gunther) Conservation reporting requirements exemption provided for municipal utilities.

HF671 (Gunther) Telephone company service promotions and packages regulated.

HF892 (Gunther) Independent telephone companies deregulated.

HF794 (Gunther) Education telecommunications fund established, support provided to kindergarten through grade 12 schools and public library telecommunications networks, access fee imposed, and money appropriated.

And other bills to be announced.

State Government Finance

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Bill Haas

Agenda: Legislative Auditor's Management Letter on the Department of Finance.

Additional agenda items may be added.

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Jerry Dempsey

Agenda: HF886 (Holberg) Metropolitan Council agency long-range policy plan regional improvement cost analysis required.

HF926 (Holberg) Metropolitan Council service improvement plan authority repealed.

HF944 (Holberg) Local public notice newspaper designation requirements exception provided.

HF689 (Buesgens) Metropolitan Council use of energy forward pricing mechanisms authorized.

HF785 (Buesgens) Metropolitan government provisions modified relating to reporting requirements, metropolitan parks and open space commission abolished, and dischargers directly assessed wastewater treatment user fees.

WEDNESDAY, March 26

8:15 AM

Transportation Finance

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. William Kuisle

Agenda: HF213 (Blaine) Local fire departments reimbursed for extinguishing certain motor vehicle fires, local authority granted to collect unpaid bills for certain emergency services from nonresidents, and money appropriated.

HF902 (DeLaForest) Native grass seeds purchase prohibited with dedicated highway funds.

HF199 (Anderson, I.) Koochiching County authorized to establish a port authority, and local government units authorized to apply for foreign trade zone powers.

Jobs and Economic Development Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther

Agenda: HF748 (Gunther) Economic development, housing, jobs, and state government finance funding provided, and money appropriated.

Public Utilities Commission.

Bureau of Mediation Services.

Humanities Commission.

Health and Human Services Policy

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau

Agenda: To be announced.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment

Agenda: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources budget.

10:15 AM

Education Finance

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Alice Seagren

Agenda: To Be Announced

Judiciary Policy and Finance

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Steve Smith

Agenda: To be announced.

Taxes

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams

Agenda: To be announced

Environment and Natural Resources Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth

Agenda: HF790 (Hoppe) Migratory game bird shooting hours modified.

HF789 (Hoppe) Game and migratory waterfowl refuge provisions modified, suspension of license and permit privileges provided, turkey license provisions modified, and walleye possession size limits provided.

12:30 PM

Higher Education Finance

Room: 300S State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Doug Stang

Agenda: HF746 (Cox) Meningococcal disease information reception and signature of written waiver by higher education students residing in on-campus housing required.

Witnesses: Nora Stewart, Lockridge, Grindal, Nauen; Jane Hession; Maddonna McDermott, Health Director, University of St. Thomas.

HF 833 (Hilty) Fond du Lac tribal and community college baccalaureate programs established in elementary education and sustainable development.

HF872 (Anderson) Higher education reciprocity agreements, state grants, fees, and Minnesota college savings plan clarifying, conforming, and technical changes provided; revenue bond limit increased, and learn and earn money usage clarified.

HF 864 (Stang) Higher education services office modified.

Transportation Policy

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Ron Erhardt

Agenda: MNDOT Agency Bills.

HFXXXX (Magnus) Trunk highway turnbacks.

HFXXXX (Magnus) Railroad property reimbursement or replacement land.

HFXXXX (Howes) Northern zone load study amendments.

HFXXXX (Holberg) Acquisition of right-of-way

from common interest communities.

Governmental Operations and Veterans

Affairs Policy

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes

*** Note: *** Change in Agenda

Agenda: Continuation of Tues., March 25 agenda.

Please Note: The government operations Committee will also be meeting Wednesday and Thursday evening.

Agriculture Policy

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Howard Swenson

*** Note: *** Change in Agenda

Bill(s) Added

Agenda: HF1090 (Demmer) Plant pest, pest control, and seed laws recodified and clarified.

HF969 (Penas) Emergency food embargo authority provided to commissioner of agriculture in times of national security or peacetime emergency.

HF978 (Otremba) Country of origin labeling required of certain food products.

2:30 PM

Capital Investment

Room: Basement Hearing Room

Chair: Rep. Phil Krinkie

Agenda: Update on information requested from the Amateur Sports Commission related to National Youth Golf Course Review of the Prairie Expo project and discussion of the cost to the state.

Civil Law

Room: 5 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Mary Liz Holberg

*** Note: *** Change in Agenda

Agenda: HF564 (Borrell) Open meeting law violations administrative remedy provided, and civil penalties prescribed.

HF937 (Smith) Child support enforcement data classified; and procedure, support enforcement, and funding provisions clarified.

HF806 (Kielkucki) Liability limits provided for nonprofits providing day training and habilitation services for adults and children with mental retardation and related conditions.

HF792 (Tingelstad) Gestational surrogacy agreements authorized relating to assisted reproduction.

HF818 (Tingelstad) Artificial insemination parentage provisions modified.

HF768 (Anderson, J.) Military certificates of discharge classified as private data, and release procedures provided.

HF264 (Biernat) Housing violation summons and hearing scheduling requirements modified.

Additional bills may be added to this schedule.

State Government Finance

Room: 500N State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Bill Haas

Agenda: Governor's State Government Finance Bill (HF749).

Anyone wishing to testify on the Governor's bill please contact Jared Jordal at 296-5318.

Additional agenda items may be added.

Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs

Room: 200 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Jerry Dempsey

Agenda: HF321 (Cox) Northfield medical facilities related to the municipal hospital authorized.

HF390 (Erickson) Elections conducted by mail; county auditor approval requirement eliminated. HF923 (Westrom) Township officer conflict of interest law exception provided.

HF625 (Westrom) Central Lakes Region sanitary sewer district established.

HF561 (Gerlach) Tobacco sales to minors uniform mandatory penalties imposed, mitigating circumstances defined, and electronic age verification required.

Regulated Industries Liquor Subcommittee

Room: 10 State Office Building

Chair: Rep. Torrey Westrom

Agenda: Note: Full committee will not be meeting at this time. Instead, the liquor subcommittee will be using the room to hear local liquor bills for marking up the omnibus local liquor bill.

The following bills will be heard:

HF57 (Borrell) St. Michael on-sale liquor licenses authorized.

HF269 (Klinzing) Woodbury additional on-sale liquor licenses authorized.

HF290 (Westerberg) Blaine additional on-sale liquor licenses authorized.

HF310 (Kelliher) Minneapolis Historic Pantages Theatre on-sale liquor license authorized.

HF342 (Buesgens) Elko Speedway on-sale liquor license authorized.

HF356 (Dempsey) State fair on-sale liquor license authorized for sale of Minnesota-produced wine.

HF613 (Kahn) Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale wine and malt beverage license to the Southern Theatre.

HF621 (Ellison) Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale wine and malt liquor license to the Guthrie Lab.

HF705 (Severson) Sartell authorized to issue additional on-sale liquor licenses.

HF717 (McNamara) Hastings authorized to issue additional on-sale liquor licenses.

HF719 (Beard) Brewpubs authorized to make retail and wholesale sales, and municipal liquor license limit removed.

HF842 (Zellers) Maple Grove authorized to issue additional on-sale liquor licenses.

HF948 (Clark) Minneapolis authorized to issue an on-sale liquor license to the American Swedish Institute.

And other bills to be announced.

5:30 PM

Environment and Natural Resources Policy
Land Subcommittee
Room: 300N State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth
Agenda: Land Subcommittee agenda to be announced.

THURSDAY, March 27

8:15 AM

Jobs and Economic Development Finance
Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Bob Gunther
Agenda: HF748 (Gunther) Economic development, housing, jobs, and state government finance funding provided, and money appropriated.
Indian Affairs Council.
Council on Black Minnesotans.
Chicano Latino Affairs Council.
Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans.

Environment and Natural Resources Finance
Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Dennis Ozment
Agenda: To be announced.

Education Policy
Room: Room 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Barb Sykora

Agenda: Bills to be announced.

Health and Human Services Policy
Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Lynda Boudreau
Agenda: To be announced.

10:15 AM

Judiciary Policy and Finance
Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Steve Smith
Agenda: To be announced.

Environment and Natural Resources Policy
Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Tom Hackbarth
Agenda: HF 718 (Beard) Scott County surplus state land sale authorized, funds deposited in the wildlife acquisition account, and money appropriated for wildlife acquisition.
HF823 (Cornish) Natural resources commissioner's authority modified relating to employees, gifts, and grants; state parks working capital fund modified; and other natural resources administrative provisions modified.

Taxes
Room: 200 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Ron Abrams
Agenda:
HF263 (Rukavina) Nursing home levy for non-county-owned public nursing homes required.
HF461 (Pugh) Estate tax federal exemption amounts adopted.
HF495 (Johnson, J.) Metropolitan fiscal disparities law abolished.
HF514 (Lenczewski) Metropolitan Revenue

Distribution Act abolished.

12:30 PM

Higher Education Finance
Room: 300S State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Doug Stang
Agenda: HF843 (Seifert) Higher education financial aid requirements modified to include a service requirement for certain stipends.
HF449 (Kuisle) Higher education grant eligibility modified.

Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development
Room: 10 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Greg Davids
Agenda: HF800 (Hackbarth) Fireworks regulation provided, fees authorized, and local regulation limited.
Other bills to be announced.

Agriculture and Rural Development Finance
Room: 5 State Office Building
Chair: Rep. Elaine Harder
Agenda: To be announced.

5:00 PM

Meeting Time Note: After Session Adjourns
Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy
Room: Basement Hearing Room
Chair: Rep. Jim Rhodes
Agenda: Continuation of the Wed., March 26 agenda.

Constitutional Officers

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St. Paul 55155
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following the committee meeting. "It's going to end up being a tax on apprentices."

Also left to opinion is whether the sponsors would pass the registration fee onto their apprentices, and whether that fee would lead to a decrease in apprentices.

"I've heard that your department ... expects at least 1,000 or better apprentices to drop off from the program because of this charge," said Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul), who was an apprentice himself before becoming a journeyman pipefitter.

Replied Schwab, "As I hear people talk about the program and how it's improved their lives and how important it is to them, I'm finding that harder and harder to believe this would stop people from participating in this kind of quality program."

According to Department of Labor and Industry information, the average hourly wage for apprentice program graduates is significantly higher than for beginning apprentices. Beginning and ending average hourly wage examples are: secretary, \$14.89, \$18.16; auto mechanic, \$9.70, \$18.40; printer, \$16.38, \$27.30; and carpenter, \$13.33, \$25.24. 🐼

Minnesota State Agencies

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Agriculture	297-2200
Toll Free	1-800-967-2474
Children, Families and Learning	582-8200
Commerce	296-4026
Corrections	642-0200
Economic Security	296-3711
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Veterans Affairs	296-2562

Reflections

Overland routes up the Mississippi River from the Missouri and Wisconsin territories and down from Canada were American Indian trails that became established modes for modern-day travel in Minnesota. Explorers and fur traders in search of new land and resources through the wilderness followed these paths that became the first roads of the midwestern territories.

Pioneers Le Sueur, Radisson, DuLuth, Faribault, Nicollet, Hennepin, Pike, and others also followed American Indian canoe routes along the shores of Lake Superior and the St. Croix River; up the Red and Minnesota rivers in the western and central areas of the state; and up the Mississippi River from Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois.

Late in the 19th century, others who helped develop a road system were railroad barons like James J. Hill, and lumber magnates who included Thomas Shelvin, Henry Akeley, and Frederick Weyerhaeuser. Hill helped to improve the importance of roads by often building train tracks along existing roads. The lumbermen supplied materials for use in rail cars and in private and commercial vehicles. Special requirements for transporting lumber also helped to improve routes for getting goods to their customers.

Rural postal deliveries, commercial transportation, and later, automobiles contributed to pressures for better roads. Many roads were impassable during bad weather and automobile use was very disorganized. The need for a full-time highway department to address these issues was eminent.

A state highway commission was formed in 1905. One of its appointed members was Charles M. Babcock, a strong supporter of the "Good Roads Movement" that began around the end of the 1800s. Babcock became the first highway commissioner in 1917 when a state highway department was

authorized by the Legislature.

During this period, 90 percent of the roads in the state were dirt roads, most impassable in bad weather. While campaigning across the state to get a "Good Roads" amendment passed, Babcock and state Sen. Patrick McGarry had to dig themselves out of 300 mud holes. Babcock's amendment to fund the construction of better roads passed by an overwhelming majority.

In the 1920s, Babcock successfully advocated for the passage of a gasoline tax amendment to the constitution to build and maintain public roads. Babcock is responsible for Minnesota building the first trunk highway system in the country.



Even up to the middle of the last century, many roads in the United States were unpaved, making them virtual quagmires after a hard rain.

When Babcock became a member of the American Association of State

Highway Officials, he played a key role in the planning and implementation of a federal highway system. Babcock became president of the organization in 1923.

He and his national colleagues advocated for and persuaded the federal government to provide aid for building a federal public highway system across the country, from north to south and east to west.

The new U.S. highway system, along with a numbering system to replace named highways, followed Babcock's state trunk highway plan. One of Babcock's trunk highways in the state was the old Roosevelt Highway – the first to be paved in the state. It became the present day Highway 10 under the federal highway system.

Charles M. Babcock's strong determination led him to "Get Minnesota out of the mud."

— LECLAIR GRIER LAMBERT

Photo courtesy of the Federal Highway Administration Web site.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: STEVE SVIGGUM
 MAJORITY LEADER: ERIK PAULSEN
 MINORITY LEADER: MATT ENTENZA

MINNESOTA INDEX

Tax time

Millions of tax returns processed by the state Department of Revenue in 2002	2.4
Millions projected this year	2.5
Percentage of electronic filers in 2002 that received their state refund	
within five days	85
Taxes paid by Minnesotans per capita in 2001	\$2,722
National rank	4
U.S. average, per capita	\$1,969.44
Minnesota collections in state and local taxes in 2000, in billions	\$17.6
As percentage of total income	11.2
Projected 2005 state and local tax collection, in billions	\$20.6
Projected percentage of income	11
Approximate percentage of 2000 total collected at state level	71.9
Anticipated percentage in 2005	73
Income taxes collected as percent of total tax collections in 2000	37.3
Projected in 2005	36
Property taxes as percent of 2000 total tax collections	30.3
In 2005, projected	31.4
Year 2000 income tax collection, as a percent, borne by Minnesotan residents	96
Percentage of general sales tax paid by Minnesota residents	83
Percentage of property taxes on industrial property paid by Minnesotans	11.7
Approximate number of Wisconsin residents working in Minnesota or	
vice versa	75,000
Wisconsin's last approximate income tax reciprocity payment to Minnesota	
(December 2001), in millions	\$48
State corporate income tax rate for tax year 2003	9.8
States with higher maximum rates	3
State sales tax rate, as percent	6.5
States that have higher rate, as of January 2003	3
States with same rate	2
Excise tax per pack of cigarettes, as of January, in cents	48
State rank	26
Tax in highest state (Massachusetts)	\$1.51
State motor fuel excise tax rate per gallon of gas as of Jan. 1, in cents	20
States with higher rate	23

Sources: 2003 Minnesota Tax Incidence Study, March 2003, Department of Revenue, other department publications, Federation of Tax Administrators, U.S. Census Bureau

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