

SESSION WEEKLY



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MEDICAL MARIJUANA

MORE OMNIBUS BILLS HIT THE FLOOR

BROADBAND CATCH UP

HF2422 - HF2443

SESSION WEEKLY

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On the cover: Colin Wilkinson, of St. Paul, drums up support to cut taxes with participants at a Tax Rally in front of the Capitol April 14.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid

A heated debate

Global warming divides legislators along party lines

By NICK BUSSE

Two very different crowds of people — both numbering in the thousands — found themselves congregating less than 100 yards away from each other April 14 on the grassy mall in front of the State Capitol building. One group came to protest tax increases proposed by DFL legislators; the other came to call for legislation that would help curb global warming.

The two events weren't planned to coincide with each other, but a few of the tax protesters decided to make their opinion on global warming known. They lingered on the edge of the crowd holding up brightly colored signs that read "I (HEART) GLOBAL WARMING." This piqued the interest of the environmentalists, some of whom decided to confront the sign-bearers.

The sporadic arguing that ensued didn't get too out of hand — possibly thanks in part to a pair of State Patrol officers patrolling the Capitol grounds that day — but it did point to what has become a prominent feature of the debate on climate change. For better or worse, the debate on global warming, like so many other debates, has fallen dependably along partisan lines. Nowhere is this truer than in the Minnesota Legislature.

Differing views

Global warming, the increase in average worldwide temperatures that many scientists attribute to a dramatic spike in greenhouse gas

emissions in the last century, has captivated the American public in recent years — a trend reflected in recent public opinion polls, as well as by the notoriety garnered by "An Inconvenient Truth," former Vice President Al Gore's documentary film on the subject.

At the Legislature, the issue has been given a sense of urgency this year, with House and Senate DFLers pushing hard for legislation that would help reduce global warming. This involves two strategies: investing in renewable energy sources that do not contribute to climate change, and a more direct approach that would place a cap on greenhouse gas emissions.

The first strategy has enjoyed bipartisan support. Investing in renewable energy is perceived to have a number of ancillary benefits unrelated to climate change, such as creating jobs, spurring rural economic growth and cutting down on pollution. As a result, the most aggressive renewable energy standard in the United States — 25 percent renewable power by 2025 — passed both the House and Senate with overwhelming

bipartisan majorities early on in the session, and was eagerly signed into law Feb. 22 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The second approach, however, is more controversial. Capping or reducing greenhouse gas emissions places a burden on power companies that only makes sense if you believe humans are causing global warming. Not everyone does.

"I know there's varying views of it, but I think most of the Republican members think it's being overplayed as an absolute science law that has been tested and proven," said [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake).

Westrom, the lead Republican on the House Energy Finance and Policy Division, is confounded by the seemingly unanimous consensus among Democrats about global warming.

In January, DFLers organized an unprecedented joint House and Senate informational presentation on the issue. Members of various environment and energy-related committees gathered in the House Chamber Jan. 30 to hear presentations on climate change by scientists, environmentalists and religious leaders. The crux of their message: global warming is real, its consequences will be devastating and action must be taken to stop it.

"The alarm on global climate change has been sounded, and now is the time to act," [House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher](#) (DFL-Mpls) proclaimed at the presentation. Westrom complains that no opposing viewpoints were offered.

"We've gone from discussion and debate about global warming to all of the sudden, 'It's fact. There's no more research needed, and let's take drastic steps that may or may not be solutions to a problem that may or may not exist,'" Westrom said.

Mitigating the problem

If there is a political football in the debate on global warming in Minnesota, it is the Global Warming Mitigation Act of 2007. Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill ([HF375/SF192](#)) would implement a cap-and-trade system on greenhouse gas emissions, whereby aggregate emissions from power plants would be limited and power companies



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TOM OLMSCHIED

First Reading continued on page 4

given “allowances” of emissions that they could trade with one another. The overall goal would be to reduce emissions to 80 percent below their 2005 base levels by 2050.

According to Ruud, the science on global warming is solid, and it would be foolish not to take steps to address it.

“My main motivation is my kids. As an adult and as a policymaker, I really think it’s irresponsible to allow public policy to continue ignoring our current knowledge,” she said.

Ruud and other supporters of global warming legislation point to reports like the one recently released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an international organization that assesses research on global warming. A summary of the report, based on the conclusions of hundreds of international scientists, was released April 6, outlining some of the likely effects of global warming in the coming century: violent weather, heat waves, shortages of fresh water and changing ecosystems across the globe.

Some, like [Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji),

say that the effects of global warming can already be observed here in Minnesota. Moe said that winters in northern Minnesota have been getting increasingly shorter in recent years, impacting the economy in his district, which relies heavily on outdoor recreation.

“We’re feeling the impacts now,” he stated during a March 6 committee hearing on Ruud’s bill.

Nevertheless, many Republicans aren’t sold on the science of global warming — or the Global Warming Mitigation Act.

“The global warming act that’s been brought forward to us is given to inexperienced legislators that have no clue what they’re doing and are being led around by the environmental activists,” said [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton).

Magnus, who supports renewable energy, is nevertheless skeptical about global warming.

“I don’t really think it’s a partisan issue; I think it’s an issue of if you support the claims of the environmental activists who’ll tell you in one sentence that two-plus-two equals three, and two sentences later that two-plus-two equals 10, and not being able to justify either one.”

Finding common ground

One Republican who does believe that global warming is caused by humans is [Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount).

Ozment believes that as evidence of global warming continues to mount, and as the economic implications of climate change become clear, many of his Republican colleagues will convert to his point of view.

However, Ozment also believes that a global problem requires a global solution. Although it’s important for the state to take steps to deal with global warming, Ozment said a cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions — and the economic burdens it would entail — makes little sense unless it’s implemented on a nationwide basis.

“Many times I see my colleagues ... want to take tremendous reversal actions right here in Minnesota, as if our changes or our actions are going to somehow correct the world’s problem. It’s not,” Ozment said.

Other legislators, regardless of their views on the subject, see a groundswell of public support for global warming legislation. During a Feb. 19 floor debate on the renewable energy standard bill, for example, [Rep. Ron Erhardt](#) (R-Edina) offered his fellow conservatives a word of advice on why they should pay attention to global warming:

“For a lot of you, I think you should



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Alex Lagergran, center, is surrounded as she fills in the footprint she drew on a petition to lesson the “global carbon footprint” during a Global Warming Day of Action rally on the front lawn of the Capitol April 14.

Warming continued on page 23

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held April 12-19 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House, or the bill language signed by the governor.

GOVERNMENT

An end to a department

A Gov. Tim Pawlenty-led initiative to abolish the Department of Employee Relations was passed unanimously by the House April 17.

Sponsored by [Rep. Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) (DFL-Winona), [HF1048](#) would abolish the department as of June 1, 2008, and transfer the duties to the departments of Finance, Administration and Health. The state would see an initial savings of \$139,000 a year — the commissioner's salary — with the potential for more savings with shared agency services, Pelowski said.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope) is the sponsor.

"We do have complete support with most of the employee unions," DOER Commissioner Patricia Anderson said in a previous committee hearing. She indicated there wouldn't be any job losses, but some job descriptions could change.

This was a concern for [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria). "We're getting rid of an entire state agency and the result of that is the net savings to the taxpayer of one job," he said on the House floor. There have to be more efficiencies there, he added.

"The bill reflects the negotiations by Commissioner Anderson," Pelowski said. There is a potential for more savings in coming years, he said.

Pelowski said he approved of the union-sponsored language in the bill that states: "In addition to any other protection, no employee in the classified service shall suffer job loss, have a salary reduced, or have employment benefits reduced as a result of a reorganization mandated or recommended." Any action taken after July 1, 2009 would not be considered a result of reorganization, under the bill.

— P. OSTBERG

Local to statewide cable franchising

Providing more competition between cable providers in the state is the aim of a bill sponsored [Rep. Sheldon Johnson](#) (DFL-St. Paul). [HF2351](#) was approved without recommendation April 13 by the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division. It now goes to the Commerce and Labor Committee. Johnson said his intent is that it be the catalyst for more discussion on the subject.

The bill's provisions, brought to Johnson by Qwest Communications International Inc., would shift cable regulation from local governments to the state, and call for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to authorize the video providers. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the change would relieve carriers from negotiating with municipalities to offer services. Some providers argue these negotiations are barriers to entry into the market.

A Federal Communications Commission report released in December 2006 noted that cable prices overall increased more than 5 percent in 2005, and by 93 percent prior to the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 — although prices are 17 percent lower where wire-line cable competition is present, the report states.

Through changes proposed in the bill, Qwest is seeking to provide wire-line cable competition. John Stanoch, Qwest state president, said the bill would "mainly increase competition that will result in lower prices for consumers and accelerate the deployment of broadband throughout the state." In nine other states, cable providers are regulated at the state level, he said.

Tony Mendoza, representing the Minnesota Cable Communications Association, said "The Qwest bill is a solution in search of a problem." Current state law works to bring telephone and video services to everyone, he said.

Gerald Knickerbocker, representing the Minnesota Telecom Alliance, said the industry has little competition and that "you can see it in the rates." The bill would create a more balanced playing field for telecommunications companies looking to enter the marketplace, he said.

The Senate companion, [SF2216](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action in the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Omnibus bills keep rolling along

As of press time, the House was still expected to act upon several omnibus bills this week. Look to next week's Session Weekly for updated features or highlights on the following bills and others:

- [HF953/SF1997*](#) - Omnibus state government finance bill;
- [HF797/SF1989*](#) - Omnibus higher education finance bill; and
- [HF297/SF2171*](#) - Omnibus health care and human services finance bill.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Freedom to Breathe

With approval by the House Finance Committee April 16, the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 must now overcome a final hurdle: the House floor.

Sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Kathleen Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), [HF305/SF238*](#), which passed the Senate 41-24 on March 27, would ban smoking in public places including bars, restaurants, places of employment and public transit.

Proponents have often classified the issue as one of worker safety, saying that secondhand smoke has been scientifically proven to adversely affect nonsmokers.

"This bill is an effort to protect the workforce from an unsafe workplace," Huntley said. "There is no risk-free exposure to secondhand smoke."

Opponents argue that the legislation would stifle individual rights, and may impose hardship to businesses forced to acquiesce to a ban.

"Contrary to what people say, I think if this bill passed it will have a substantial impact on income," [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) said.

During its travels through more than a half-dozen committees, members adopted an amendment that would permit smoking in bars — defined as having at least 50 percent of sales from liquor — with enclosed, ventilated smoking rooms, so long as they're given local approval.

An amendment successfully offered by Rukavina earlier this session would also make employees who lose their job due to bar closure eligible for the Dislocated Worker Program, which provides counseling, training and job placement services to people who are unemployed.

Several members attempted but failed to amend the bill in the House Finance Committee, including [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall), who sought language prohibiting smoking of marijuana in public places. The effort was in response to [HF655](#), sponsored by Huntley, which would permit medicinal use of the drug. The amendment failed.

Seifert and others also challenged the legislation's fairness, saying the bill wrongly exempts casinos on tribal land, and would force change on business owners such as farmers, who work with very small staffs on private land.

"I marvel at the overreaching of this bill," Seifert said. "Many people think this is confined to bars, but it's much more than that."

— M. SIMPSON

Split in two

Over two days of hearings, a set of procedural moves were used to align provisions from the omnibus housing and public health finance bill, HF2241, with two Senate omnibus bills. The House Finance Committee split the House bill April 12, with some provisions being attached to one omnibus package and some onto another.

Sponsored by [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), [HF2241](#) provided \$556 million for affordable, transitional and emergency housing; environmental research; and 17 state boards, including the Veterans Home Board.

Articles pertaining to health and human services were folded into [SF2171](#), the omnibus health care and human services finance bill, sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. Linda Berglin](#) (DFL-Mpls). Such provisions include studies on health and the environment and funding for boards.

The remaining provisions, which pertained to housing, were incorporated into the omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill, [SF2089](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

The day before, committee members amended HF2241, removing a study on the herbicide Atrazine, an effort led by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), who said the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division, which he chairs, should have debated the issue.

"You're picking one chemical, and it's an ag chemical," he said. "It's a message I'm trying to send on process; it's not Atrazine."

Others tried to push more funding for Gov. Tim Pawlenty's pandemic flu initiative, which would receive \$19.75 million in his proposal. Efforts were curbed after a promise from Huntley, who said he would add funding once the provision was added to SF2171.

— M. SIMPSON

POST HASTE



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

A figure walking along the second floor of the State Capitol building gives scale to the Italian marble columns surrounding the grand staircase.

A miner's disease

Members from two House divisions heard about plans for two proposed studies concerning mesothelioma — a rare, fatal form of cancer most often found in miners and other laborers exposed to asbestos and similar fibers.

The House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division met two weeks after the Minnesota Department of Health announced its intentions to conduct research.

The first study would be an extension of research first completed in 2003, which examined how asbestos affected 72,000 miners working on Minnesota's Iron Range from 1930 to 1982. At a cost of \$750,000 to \$1 million, the new study would evaluate the consequences of taconite dust exposure and compare the health of miners originally studied to the health of Minnesota's general population.

The second study, at a cost of \$250,000, would attempt to set regulatory exposure limits of airborne dust based on assessments of cancer risks in the region.

Health department representatives said they hope to complete both studies without state funding, relying on federal funds for the first study and existing department money for the second.

The studies come in the wake of 35 new cases of the disease, identified from the pool of miners previously studied.

Testifiers were careful to draw distinctions between mesothelioma and another asbestos-related disease, asbestosis, which eliminates lung tissue to the point of suffocation after prolonged exposure. They said mesothelioma — a lung tumor — can emerge 40 to 50 years after exposure to "relatively low" asbestos levels.

Dr. Ian Greaves, an occupational environmental physician for the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota, said that taconite fibers, which are released to the air through crushing, are presumed to have the same health effects as asbestos, though studies have yet to prove the link.

"It's unknown to what extent taconite is likely causing these problems," he said. According to the Department of Health, 136 men were diagnosed with mesothelioma between 1988 and 2005, more than twice the expected number.

The divisions took no action.

— M. SIMPSON

If you will be visiting the Capitol in the near future, call the Capitol Historic Site Program at (651) 296-2881 to schedule a tour.

HUMANITIES

Funding the state's sesquicentennial

The state will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2008, and many cities and counties won't be far behind. Minnesotans could help fund these celebrations if a new contribution checkoff is added to 2007 and 2008 state tax forms.

[HF1009](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), would place a sesquicentennial checkoff on corporate and individual state income tax and property tax refund returns so taxpayers could make voluntary contributions of \$1 or more to an account for sesquicentennial celebrations throughout the state.

The bill was laid over April 12 for possible omnibus bill inclusion by the House Taxes Committee. There is no Senate companion.

When more donation checkoffs are added to tax forms, contributions to existing checkoffs go down, said Nina Manzi, legislative analyst with the nonpartisan House Research Department. She added that some states require each checkoff to generate a certain level of income or they are removed from the tax form — but since the sesquicentennial checkoff would only be temporary, this would not apply.

[Rep. Morrie Lanning](#) (R-Moorhead) said if the Legislature was going to consider this checkoff, it should have been done a couple of years ago so the money would already be available.

Any money contributed to the account would be tax deductible, according to the nonpartisan House Research Department. The money would be used by the Minnesota Historical Society to fund celebrations, including grants to cities and counties.

— S. HEGMAN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mansions for rent

Two mansions in Little Falls have the chance of being used by the public, if a 2006 law is repealed.

Sponsored by [Rep. Al Doty](#) (DFL-Royalton), [HF756](#) would repeal a 2006 law, initiated by former Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls), that prohibits a city from selling, leasing or contracting away city-owned property listed on the National Register of Historic Places unless the city follows certain procedures that take at least two years. According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, based on the criteria defining the cities, the law applies to Little Falls.

The buildings in question are two mansions donated to the city 10 years ago. The 2006 law prohibits the city from making any money from the property. Getting rid of this law will let the city use the property, Doty said. For example, currently if someone wants to have wedding party there, the city is unable to lease

Highlights continued on page 23

ENLIGHTENING DISCUSSION



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Hackbarth, left, and Sen. Larry Pogemiller, center, join Mary Lahammer, right, host of Almanac: At the Capitol, in the House Chamber gallery to debate dedicating money to the environment and arts, as members continued to debate the omnibus K-12 education finance bill April 18.

Nearly unanimous support

Vets return, biofuel initiatives — unlikely mix draws bipartisan praise

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

In what can only be described as sweeping bipartisan support, the omnibus agriculture, rural economies and veterans affairs finance bill passed the House 131-2 on April 17.

HF2227, sponsored by [Rep. Al Juhnke](#) (DFL-Willmar), was the first in a string of omnibus bills to be acted on by the House this week. The \$175.1 million General Fund budget proposal is the culmination of work completed in the House Veterans Affairs Division, the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division and its corresponding policy committee.

Overall, Republicans were on board in complimenting the bill's provisions.

"If we could slim the bill down a tiny bit and get quick agreement, this could be a very good start to the session in getting bipartisan support on ag and veterans," [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) said. He added that the bill may be one of the few to avoid Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veto pen because its proposed spending is nearly in line with the governor's target.

Opposition came, however, from [Rep. Mark Buesgens](#) (R-Jordan), [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) and [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake), who announced his intention not to cast a vote on the bill.

Buesgens objected to the three fees that are proposed in the bill. "Right out of the chute, we have to start sticking it to the taxpayers," he said.

Olson said that procedurally he questioned the bill because it is not on a single subject, as required by the state constitution.

Except for amendments from the sponsor, the bill remained amendment-free through the committee process; however, two amendments were successfully added during floor discussion. While one is technical in nature, the other,

added by [Rep. Bud Heidgerken](#) (R-Freeport), deals with an unintended consequence for deployed National Guard members who play amateur baseball.

Heidgerken said that without the amendment, baseball-playing guard members who are expected to return in late summer — just in time for playoff games governed by an amateur athletic association — would find themselves benched because of a rule stating that players must participate in at least four games before the playoffs. The amendment states that a military person who is a qualified member of the team would be eligible for play.

Preparing for vets return

The bill offers a significant increase to the budgets for the departments of agriculture, veterans affairs and military affairs.

Juhnke drew attention to the 91 percent budgetary increase proposed for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which would receive \$27.4 million over the biennium. He said the bulk of the money would go

to programming and services to address the needs of the returning military members — especially in preparation for the expected return later this summer, en masse, of

A Quick Look HF2227

Focus: Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, Board of Animal Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Military Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs.

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$175.1 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

Ethanol producer payments.....	\$30.3 mil.
Enlistment incentives.....	\$20.4 mil.
Next Generation initiative.....	\$4.4 mil.
Clean Water Legacy	\$2.7 mil.
Dairy development and enhancement grants.....	\$2 mil.
Renewable energy grants	\$1.2 mil.
Organics product cost share	\$ 1 mil.
Vets depleted uranium screening.....	\$1 mil.
Second Harvest food bank milk grants	\$1 mil.
Vets higher ed. offices.....	\$900,000
Bovine tuberculosis elimination	\$816,000
Minnesota Grown promotion activities	\$372,000
Sustainable demonstration projects	\$320,000
World War II dedication	\$250,000
Honor guard reimbursement.....	\$200,000
Vets counseling	\$80,000
Duluth Port grain inspection	\$50,000

Selected policy provisions:

- develop Minnesota Grown organics label
- system for statewide collection of waste pesticides
- establishment of a Minnesota Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council and program
- establishment of a Food Safety and Defense Task Force
- sunset continued for five years on open-air swine basin moratorium
- by 2025, no less than 25 percent of total energy consumed in the state to come from renewable resources
- a nonappropriated fund for recreational activities and facilities at National Guard-controlled operations, including Camp Ripley



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Al Juhnke describes the omnibus agriculture, rural economies and veterans affairs finance bill during floor debate on the House floor April 17.

more than 2,500 deployed National Guard members.

The Department of Military Affairs would receive \$40.2 million over the biennium.

From college campuses to medical help, “We want to be prepared,” Juhnke said.

Veterans outreach programs would see significant funding. More than \$2.8 million would be provided over the biennium to the base for veterans programs and services at the county level. The bill would also provide \$1 million over the biennium for expansion of the higher education veterans assistance programs, which include informational offices on various campuses of higher education.

[Rep. Dan Severson](#) (R-Sauk Rapids) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have provided more money for that effort. He said that many veterans will go to college upon returning from service, and that it is not always an easy transition (figures show about a 30 percent drop-out rate for combat veterans). “We want to make sure that after 16 months, our guys are properly served on the campuses. ... We need to boost this.”

Ag issues

While veterans issues received a good share of the attention, agriculture-related issues would get most of the funding proposed in the bill.

Overall, the bill proposes \$105 million over the biennium for various ag programming, including proposals relating to the governor’s Next Generation biofuel initiative.

Funds to be appropriated in the second year of the biennium would be awarded by a new NextGen Energy Board, which would be created in the first year of the biennium. The board would also research and report to the commissioner of agriculture and the Legislature on how the state can invest its resources to achieve energy independence. The board would be charged with developing grant programs to assist locally owned facilities to move the state toward energy independence through the production of bioenergy.

Funding is also proposed for ethanol producer payments and grants for several sustainable and organic programs and research.

‘Thank you’

Before the vote, members one after another stood to extend their thank-yous to the committee members for the bill’s initiatives.

“We are at a key time in Minnesota. We have the most returning veterans since World War II and what we are doing is so important for their reintegration,” [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#) (R-Andover) said.

It was not just the military provisions that drew accolades. Members complimented the inclusion of provisions they said would move the state’s biofuel industry in a new direction, and especially in the use of cellulosic materials.

“I do appreciate the investment this bill makes as a big part of the future of agriculture and for the state in general when we look at the biofuels efforts that are in the bill,” [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) said.

The Senate passed the bill 65-0 April 19 after deleting the House language and inserting its own. The bill will now be returned to the House. [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy) is the Senate sponsor. 🗽

Everything under the sun

Bill boosts funding for environment, natural resources, energy

By Nick Busse

After more than 10 hours of floor debate that lasted into the early morning hours of April 18, the House passed the omnibus environment, natural resources and energy finance bill 95-38.

Sponsored by [Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) and [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the bill ([HF2410/SF2096*](#)) would appropriate more than \$449 million — an \$85 million net increase — from the General Fund, with an emphasis on new funding for clean water and renewable energy. It now goes back to the Senate, where it passed 61-2 on March 27.

The bill proposes spending approximately \$22 million more than the governor's budget recommendations. [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) warned that the governor would never sign such a bill.

"Members, the bill is destined to a veto," Sviggum said. He unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have reinstated most of the governor's original proposals. [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm) derided the amendment as a "rubber stamp for the governor."

"Members, we're the House of Representatives. We don't live in a monarchy where, when the governor says 'jump,' we say 'how high.' It's our responsibility to actually put our own budget together," Sertich said.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) used the occasion to criticize the DFL majority for forging ahead with budget bills he said would necessitate a tax increase.

"You can't be voting for each and every one of these bills and expect that we're going to

have a balanced budget at the end of the day, unless you're going to have a big tax increase — and I know there are people on the other side of the aisle that just want to force that to happen," he said.

In all, 47 amendments were offered to the bill, which covers topics ranging from invasive aquatic species to rural wind energy. It also contains a number of provisions unrelated to energy or the environment. Primarily, these deal with financial services regulated by the Department of Commerce.

Environment

The environment and natural resources portion of the bill, which comes from [HF1651](#)

(also sponsored by Wagenius), contains new funding for Clean Water Legacy programs, invasive species programs, the Board of Water and Soil Resources and state and metropolitan parks and trails.

Numerous amendments were offered to remove several controversial policy provisions in the bill. [Rep. Tom Hackbarth](#) (R-Cedar

A Quick Look SF2096

Focus: Board of Water and Soil Resources, Department of Commerce, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Zoological Garden, Pollution Control Agency, Public Utilities Commission and Science Museum of Minnesota

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$431.4 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

New or added programming:

Clean Water Legacy	\$47.1 mil.
BWSR	\$14.7 mil.
Hydrogen power grants	\$10 mil.
Renewable energy research	\$10 mil.
E85 Everywhere	\$8 mil.
Rural wind energy	\$5.3 mil.
Rock-Tenn steam plant	\$4 mil.
Aquatic invasive species	\$3.2 mil.
Metropolitan parks	\$1.5 mil.
State parks and trails	\$1.5 mil.
Science Museum	\$1 mil.
Minnesota Zoo	\$1 mil.

Selected policy provisions:

- greater oversight responsibilities and powers for BWSR
- a venison donation program for deer hunters, funded by a \$1 surcharge on all deer licenses
- a ban on off-road vehicle trails on state lands in four northern Minnesota counties
- restrictions on the release of genetically engineered wild rice
- cash bonuses for state employees who make energy-efficiency suggestions that save the state money
- shade tree pest control programs
- a report and testing for endocrine disruptors in state surface waters
- various changes to laws relating to wetland conservation and replacement
- various changes to laws relating to financial services regulation by the Department of Commerce



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Jean Wagenius discusses SF2096, the omnibus environment, natural resources and energy finance bill, on the House floor April 17. Sponsored by Wagenius, the bill provides funding for a wide array of programs.

unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have removed a ban on off-road vehicle trails on state-administered lands in Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Hubbard counties. All of the state's 4X4 truck trails are currently located in those four counties.

"All they've got is 11 miles of trails. Eleven miles — that's all there is in the entire state, and I think we should allow them to have their 11 miles of trail, and not do away with the sport," Hackbarth said.

[Rep. Frank Moe](#) (DFL-Bemidji), who sponsored the provision, said the use of "monster mudder" trucks on state trails causes serious ecological damage to state forests and wetlands.

"We have to draw a line somewhere, members," he said.

Hackbarth also tried unsuccessfully to

remove a provision of the bill that would tighten requirements for land developers to replace wetlands, arguing that the provision would cause property tax increases. To this,

"Yes, there is taxpayer expense to protecting our wetlands long-term ... but to sit up here and say, 'Don't vote to protect water because it's going to cost money,' is extremely shortsighted."

— Rep. Dennis Ozment

[Rep. Dennis Ozment](#) (R-Rosemount) argued that public opinion strongly supports greater protection for wetlands, even if it means higher taxes.

"Yes, there is taxpayer expense to protecting our wetlands long-term ... but to sit up here and say, 'Don't vote to protect water because it's going to cost money,' is extremely shortsighted," Ozment said.

Energy

The energy provisions of the bill, pulled from [HF1392](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), would fund research and development for a diverse portfolio of

renewable energy technologies, including wind power, hydrogen power, solar power, plug-in electric hybrid vehicles and others. Also included is an \$8 million program to expand the number of ethanol pumps in the state, the so-called "E85 Everywhere" initiative.

Hilty amended the bill to allow Xcel Energy's nuclear power plant in Monticello to go ahead with construction of new above-ground dry cask storage for nuclear waste. Previously, the bill contained a provision that would have disallowed construction of the facilities until at least June 1, 2008.

[Rep. Alice Hausman](#) (DFL-St. Paul) objected to the amendment, arguing that there is ultimately no place for the nuclear waste to go.

"The waste that gets taken out of the reactor and put above ground at Monticello will stay there forever. I can say that with great confidence now, because in '94 we said the same thing about Prairie Island, and in fact, in 2007, it is still true," Hausman said. 🗽

It's about economic infrastructure

Provision for hockey surcharge draws criticism

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

It was called a bill about building the state's economic development infrastructure. But you could also call it the state's research and development package, tourism promotion, historical programming, housing and job concerns bill.

The omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill ([SF2089](#)) rolls in provisions brought forward through the House Higher Education and Work Force Development Policy and Finance Division, the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division and the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division.

"When you look at investing in Minnesota, many avenues play a role. But infrastructure is vitally important. This bill is about infrastructure, and that equates to jobs," said [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm).

Sponsored by [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the bill contains several provisions previously included in other omnibus finance bills. It proposes to spend

\$370 million in General Fund money for programming over the biennium. The bill passed the House 92-39 on April 19. The amended version was returned to the Senate and a conference committee was called for.

As with most of the finance bills before the full House this week, this bill was not immune to amendment attempts. But it was a provision imposing a 25 cent surcharge for National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I mens hockey games that didn't sit well with several Republicans.

"Members, this is Minnesota. Please, not on hockey," said [Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#)

(R-Lakeville). Calling the surcharge a tax, she offered an amendment to delete the provision.

Rukavina defended the surcharge that would support the United States Hockey Hall of Fame located in Eveleth. "This raises about \$134,000 a year in revenue."

The amendment opened a debate about fees passed by the Republicans during the last biennium, and fees proposed by the DFL so far this session. Sertich requested that Holberg table her amendment, saying he would find funding within the bill for the museum. She agreed to the move.

While 23 amendments were offered to the bill, few were successful. Rukavina was able to add a provision calling for a work group to develop recommendations for policies regarding the state's role in

federal trade policy.

Looking to the future

Emerging industries receive attention in the bill — for instance, nanotechnology, which can best be described as engineering of functional systems at the molecular scale.

The bill proposes to establish a nanotechnology development fund program, which would be a collaborative between the state, businesses and academic institutions to promote research and products based on nanotechnology and provide student internship opportunities in the

A Quick Look SF2089

Focus: Departments of Employment and Economic Development and Labor and Industry, and various boards and small agencies

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$370.3 million

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

Minnesota Minerals 21st	
Century Fund	\$50 mil.
Explore Minnesota Tourism	\$24.1 mil.
Biobusiness Alliance of Minnesota ...	\$2.2 mil.
St. Paul convention center	
debt service	\$1.8 mil.
Neighborhood Development Center	
for assistance to Global Market	
businesses	\$1 mil.
Rural Policy and Development Center ...	\$1 mil.
Minnesota Alliance of Boys and	
Girls Clubs	\$1 mil.
Minnesota Inventors Congress	\$170,000
Metropolitan Economic Development	
Association	\$510,000
Nanotechnology development fund ..	\$450,000
WomenVenture	\$400,000

Selected policy provisions:

- reduce Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board membership from 13 to 10
- call centers would need to disclose their location when asked
- working group to study state's role in federal trade policy and trade agreements
- establish small business growth acceleration program
- packinghouse workers bill of rights and ombudsman
- Safe Patient Handling Act
- ability to contact "live" specialist when seeking information about unemployment insurance
- registration of hair braiders with Minnesota Board of Barber and Cosmetology Examiners

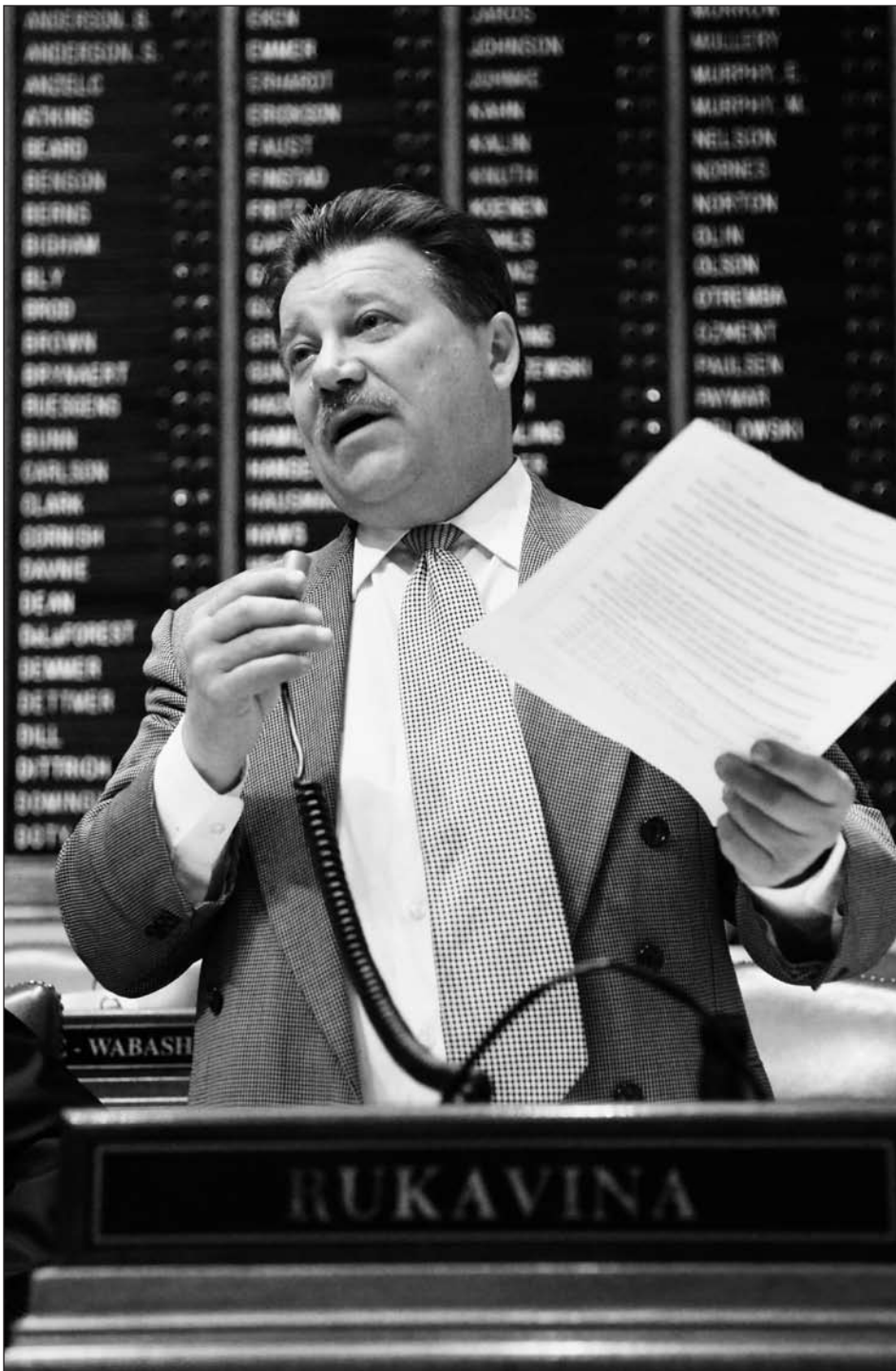


PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Tom Rukavina, sponsor of SF2089, the omnibus jobs and economic development finance bill, speaks on the House floor April 19.

field. Qualifying businesses located in the state could apply for a matching grant for nanotechnology applications, product development and research.

The fund would be administered by the Department of Employment and Economic Development, with a report on its use due to the Legislature by June 30 of each odd-numbered year.

Biobusiness incentives are also included in the bill. "This is the wave of the future," said

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul), chairman of the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee.

He highlighted the money that would be going to fund University of Minnesota enterprise labs, which act as incubators for small businesses "to hopefully get our next Medtronics."

To that end, the bill allocates money to the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota to develop programs promoting the state as a global

leader in bioscience activities. The city of Worthington would receive a \$500,000 grant for an agricultural-based bioscience training and testing center.

Business and community grants

The bill lays out more than \$13 million in funding for various organizations for grant-making purposes, including the Rural Policy and Development Center. Located in St. Peter, a \$1 million grant would be used for research and policy analysis on emerging economic and social issues in rural Minnesota. The grant would only be provided with the condition that each state-appropriated dollar be matched with a nonstate dollar.

Several communities would see projects funded, including Northome where its municipal building was damaged by fire last July. The community would receive \$350,000 to help with construction of a new building. Le Sueur County would receive \$75,000 to help with the cost of cleaning up debris in lakes caused by an August tornado.

Workforce development

Mahoney spoke about the need to train the state's workforce for the emerging industries. [Rep. Mary Murphy](#) (DFL-Hermantown) agreed and spoke of the provisions included in the bill from the division she chairs, the House Education Finance and Economic Competitiveness Finance Division.

"This bill takes people from the traditional educational institutions back to their communities. It sets a pattern for the future and where we are going. ... The economy of Minnesota is going to be tied together and improved for all Minnesotans," she said.

Under the bill, more than \$34 million over the biennium would be dedicated to workforce development. Several job training and vocational rehabilitation programs would see funding, including more than \$12 million in General Fund money for employment services for people with severe disabilities. Money would be appropriated to support programs such as interpreters to help deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind students transition into employment.

Protecting workers

The bill addresses various safety codes, but a provision calling for a meatpackers bill of rights generated several attempts at amendments, all failing.

The bill of rights would include that employees have access to adequate facilities and equipment. In addition, basic job

Development continued on page 23

House addresses safety concerns

Victims' rights, reentry programs anchor public safety bill

By CRAIG GREEN

It was around 1 a.m. April 18 when [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul) began to present [HF829](#), the omnibus public safety finance bill, on the House floor.

After he finished, [Rep. Torrey Westrom](#) (R-Elbow Lake) offered the first amendment of the night.

"I know that it's late, but with some of the things we do around here, it doesn't matter what time we do them. They're very important." Westrom then offered what many have referred to as "Emily's Law."

Emily Johnson was a 2-year-old who was killed at a daycare by a young man who was 19 days away from becoming 14 years old. This new provision would change the age at which a juvenile could be charged as an adult for a violent offense from 14 to 13. The amendment would help parents who may have to face this situation and pain in the future, Westrom said.

The amendment was overwhelmingly adopted on a voice vote.

Protection and support

HF829 covers a wide range of public safety concerns: corrections, courts, crime prevention, victim support and youth intervention programs. It proposes more than \$1.89 billion in appropriations, \$12 million more than Gov. Tim Pawlenty's recommendations.

Paymar, chairman of the House Public Safety Finance Division, focused much of his introduction on efforts to support reentry programs. Acknowledging the Legislature's responsibility for the safety of all Minnesotans, he said that there needs to be new approaches to the problems facing society.

"There are some offenders that should be

sentenced to prison for a long amount of time because of their crime and because they pose a threat to society, and there are some that must be quarantined for life," Paymar said. "But I think that it's important this body recognize that 95 percent of all offenders in our prisons will be getting out. If we want to give people who have made serious life changes a second chance, and if we want our communities to be safer, we have to have a different approach."

[Rep. Joe Mullery](#) (DFL-Mpls), chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee, spoke about proposed policy changes in the bill. "There aren't a lot of glitzy things in here, but there are a lot of sound provisions that will help keep people safe and get at a lot of the criminal problems in our state," Mullery said.

"There aren't a lot of glitzy things in here, but there are a lot of sound provisions that will help keep people safe and get at a lot of the criminal problems in our state."

— Rep. Joe Mullery

of copper wiring used to transmit gas and electric.

Amendments

By the end of four hours of discussion, 20 amendments had been offered, and 11 were adopted. Republicans successfully amended the

Specifics include stronger protections for battered women and for children against sexual predators, as well as penalties for theft

A Quick Look HF829

Focus: Board of Public Defense, Board on Judicial Standards, Court of Appeals, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Rights, Department of Public Safety, Peace Officer Standards and Training Board, Private Detective Board, Sentencing Guidelines Commission, Supreme Court, Tax Court, Trial Courts, Uniform Law Commission

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$1.89 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

Board of Public Defense.....	\$133.8 mil.
911 Emergency Services.....	\$106 mil.
Supreme Court	\$89.5 mil.
CrimNet.....	\$6.5 mil.
Probation caseload reduction	\$6.2 mil.
Drug courts	\$6 mil.
New judges (6)	\$6 mil.
Offender re-entry services	\$5.6 mil.
New forensic scientists (19)	\$2.7 mil.
Youth intervention programs	\$2 mil.
Mentoring grants for incarcerated parents.....	\$400,000
Legal advocacy for trafficking victims.....	\$300,000
Emergency assistance grants.....	\$200,000

Selected policy provisions:

- changes penalties and sentencing for sex offenders
- increases penalties for theft of copper wiring
- provides more protection for victims of sexual assault
- redefines harassment on the Internet
- repeals ticket scalping law
- requires establishment of uniform per diem for prisoners housed in county and regional jails
- allows victims of domestic abuse who fear future abuse if they remain at their residence to terminate a lease agreement
- requires that anyone convicted of domestic abuse by strangulation must register as a predatory offender
- requires employers to give victims of crime time off to attend criminal proceedings related to their case



FILE PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Michael Paymar sponsors HF829, the omnibus public safety finance bill. Passed by the House April 18, the bill includes tougher penalties for sex offenders and repeals the state's ticket scalping law.

bill seven times, the DFL majority four times.

[Rep. Dean Urdahl](#) (R-Grove City) successfully offered a provision that would prohibit civil action by anyone who claims that any weight gain, obesity or health condition is a result of consumption of a food or non-alcoholic beverage they purchased from a particular seller. Offered for another omnibus bill earlier in the session, the provision was informally dubbed the "cheeseburger law."

[Rep. Steve Simon](#) (DFL-St. Louis Park) offered an amendment that would have allowed someone to bring a civil action for damages based on personal injury caused by criminal sexual conduct. Originally presented as HF2134, the amendment also proposed that this action could be taken "six years [from] the time that this victim fully comprehends the causal connection between the sexual abuse and the injury resulting from the abuse."

Reaction was swift. [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Rep. Tom Emmer](#) (R-Delano) raised points of order that the amendment violated House rules. Kohls said that the amendment not only deals with new causes of action that need to be discussed, it should also go before the House Ways and Means

Committee to determine its fiscal impact. Both of their points were ruled not well taken by the speaker.

[House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) announced that "now the flood gates have opened." Seifert said he and fellow Republicans would begin preparing amendments that deal with other causes of civil action.

Discussion on the amendment continued until Mullery promised Simon that he would hold a hearing to discuss Simon's bill. (Up to this point, Mullery had refused to hear it.) Simon then withdrew the amendment.

Amendments not approved included a provision offered by [Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers) that would increase the penalty for anyone guilty of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult, and an amendment from [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) that would prohibit law enforcement authorities from receiving gifts or prizes.

Forty-five votes

Just before the final vote, Seifert congratulated Paymar on the bill. He said that it was "close to being doable," and that

it was "not a medicine cabinet full of poison pills." Seifert also warned that there are still a few sections that may not get past Pawlenty and could sink the bill.

"Please take us at our word, Rep. Paymar," he said. "If there is a veto [from the governor], there are 45 votes over here to sustain it."

The bill passed 96-34.

The companion bill, [SF1992](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls), was passed by the Senate 63-0 April 18, and laid on the table. HF829 now awaits action by the Senate.



Where to find information

House Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

House Public Information Services is a nonpartisan office that provides committee meeting schedules; legislator information; and publications, including the Session Weekly newsmagazine, educational brochures, and member directories. All information is available at no charge.

Most of what this office publishes can be viewed on the House's Web page. To connect, point your web browser at: www.house.mn

More funding for K-12

Compensatory funding and responsible sex education raise questions

BY STEPHEN HARDING

The omnibus K-12 education finance bill passed on the House floor 119-13 in the early morning hours of April 19. Its next destination will be a conference committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mindy Greiling](#) (DFL-Roseville), [HF6](#) outlines more than \$13.9 billion in spending for the 2008-09 biennium. The Senate version of the bill, [SF2095](#), sponsored by [Sen. LeRoy Stumpf](#) (DFL-Plummer) was approved 51-12 on March 26 and laid on the table.

HF6 is the combined blood, sweat and tears of the House K-12 Finance Division, the House E-12 Education Committee and the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division. The bill would increase education funding by \$919 million, and includes \$125 million in property tax relief and \$211 million in early education funding.

Many House members praised the bill, including co-sponsor [Rep. Carlos Mariani](#) (DFL-St. Paul), who said, "This bill is not a good bill, but a great bill."

Overall, the bill received bipartisan support; however, individual components of the bill did not.

Opposition

The portion of the bill that contains the "responsible family life and sexuality education programs" drew the most debate. [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) and [Rep. Neva Walker](#) (DFL-Mpls) battled over numerous amendments dealing with parental choice, and whether schools districts or parents should teach students about sex.

One amendment offered by Gottwalt would

have provided for a curriculum that would promote abstinence until marriage. "Abstinence programs are sometimes pooh-pooched," he said, but cited a source that he said shows that abstinence programs work.

'This is not a good bill, but a great bill. Our greatest resource isn't our lakes, rivers, harvest land, forests or minerals. Our greatest resource, our greatest asset is our young and they deserve nothing less than this bill.'

— Rep. Carlos Mariani

responsibility, and some of the language in the section is discouraging. "Abstinence is OK on one hand, and contraception is needed on the other; anyone that is a good teacher knows you can't teach contradictory concepts side by side," Erickson said.

Walker pointed out that the bill not only deals with sex, but also healthy relationships. Gottwalt told her that it is not up to her or the school districts to be teaching this, since the subject matter is not like math and science.

[Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) objected to the disparity in funding for schools because of compensatory funding. Minneapolis and St. Paul schools would be receiving a higher amount of funding than other metro and Greater Minnesota schools — an extra \$153 per pupil.

[Rep. Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton) offered an amendment that would have deleted the entire section. She said it is the parents'

A Quick Look HF6

Focus: Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Safety, ECFE, Head Start, Minnesota Council on Economic Education, Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, Minnesota and National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Minnesota State Academies, Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Minnesota State College and Universities, Office of Educational Accountability, Perpich Center for Arts Education, Special Education Task Force, University of Minnesota

2008-09 General Fund appropriation:
\$13.9 billion

General Fund amounts are for the biennium.

Funding provisions:

Special education excess cost aid\$257 mil.
Voluntary all-day kindergarten.....\$94 mil.
Adult basic education aid.....\$82 mil.
ECFE.....\$42.9 mil.
Head Start.....\$40.2 mil.
Minnesota State Academies.....\$23 mil.
Library support.....\$35.6 mil.
Perpich Center for Arts Education.....\$13.5 mil.
Limited English proficiency.....\$11.2 mil.
International Baccalaureate Programs...\$9 mil.
21st Century High Schools.....\$8.7 mil.
Early childhood community hubs.....\$2 mil.
McGregor (4) declining pupil aid.....\$100,000

Selected policy provisions:

- responsible family life and sexuality education programs
- allows school staff to take Veterans Day off if they're a veteran
- alternative school calendar pilot program and grants provided
- world language programs authorized and grants provided
- Minnesota Indian scholarship program
- scholar loan program to encourage academically talented postsecondary students of color to become E-12 teachers
- early childhood community hub planning and implementation grants



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Mindy Greiling presents the House omnibus K-12 education finance bill during floor session April 18.

“This bill moves away from equity and moves away from fairness,” Sviggum said. “The disparity of the winners and losers actually grows in this bill. This ought to be a concern for those who are not from Minneapolis and St. Paul.”

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) told Sviggum that he was living in a “fairy-tale world.”

“I’m tired of sitting on this House floor and listening to fairy tales,” he said.

[Rep. Mary Liz Holberg](#) (R-Lakeville) and [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood) unsuccessfully offered amendments that would have prohibited the distribution of political campaign materials through schools. Dean’s amendment would have prohibited teachers from being used as campaigners for a particular candidate. Dean said he brought his third-grade child to the first day of class and the teacher was wearing a campaign t-shirt for his opponent. “How would you feel if you’re that little 9-year-old kid ... if your parent’s opponent’s campaign sticker was on the teacher’s desk?” Dean asked.

Amendments adopted

[Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) successfully offered an amendment that would direct the commissioner of education to review the Appleton, Wis., school district’s nutrition program. The emphasis of the report would be on enhancements to school nutritional programs that have resulted in positive impacts on special education outcomes and costs.

Erickson successfully offered an amendment that would create an advisory task force that would consider and recommend a redesign of middle schools. Erickson wants the study done due to the fact that test scores start to decline in middle school for all sort of students.

[Rep. Rob Eastlund](#) (R-Isanti) offered a successful amendment that changes the percentage of funding that would go toward Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. The requirement would now be that 75 percent of the funding goes toward AP and 25 percent toward IB.

“Two hundred and seventy schools offer AP courses and only 11 schools offer IBO, and there are 18,900 students in AP and

1,241 students in IBO,” Eastlund said. The amendment changes the amount allocated to reflect the proportion of students that are enrolled in each program.

Eastlund also successfully amended the bill to modify a state law that allows school boards to call special elections to vote on matters requiring voter approval. He said the problem is that 50 or more voters, or 5 percent of the number of voters, can call a special election repeatedly. The amendment would tighten the rules calling for a vote.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) successfully offered an amendment that would allow students who attend charter schools to participate in extracurricular activities in the regular school district in which they reside.

Where to find information

Chief Clerk’s Office

211 State Capitol (651) 296-2314

The Chief Clerk’s Office provides copies at no charge of bills, all agendas for House sessions, and the Journal of the House.

Ramping up speed

Cities push state to play broadband catch up

By PATTY OSTBERG

"Faster, faster!" come the cries from small-business workers looking to stake their claim in the economic landscape.

Technology needs for at-home workers are increasing faster than technology is able to keep up, say some Minnesota experts. As at-home workers, and those in smaller businesses, see the landscape of opportunity, they're also facing Internet technological barriers at local and state levels.

"The U.S. really falls short in delivering truly high-speed broadband. Our speeds are a fraction of what many other industrialized nations of the world are able to obtain," said Tom Garrison, communications director for the city of Eagan. He said this is in part because the country does not have a formal technology goal, unlike some other nations.

He and others representing technologically diverse interests testified March 23 before the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division in favor of [HF2107](#), which would ensure that by 2015 all Minnesotans have Internet access at speeds equal to at least 1 billion bits per second.

That is 1,000 times faster than wireless, more than 330 times faster than the available DSL speeds in Minnesota, and 125 times faster than cable modem service, said [Rep. Sandra Masin](#) (DFL-Eagan), the bill's sponsor. The bill would also establish a state Broadband Advisory Board and give access to all Minnesotans.

The board would consist of a governor-appointed broadband policy director along with 15 members including representatives of providers, consumers, local governments and individuals knowledgeable in telecommunications. It would make recommendations to the Legislature for achieving the 2015 access goal and ways the public and private sector can work in cooperation to achieve the goal.

The impetus for the bill came from a "Gig" group with some representatives from the Eagan Technology Working Group, which consists of businesses, residents, city leaders and technology experts, Masin said.

Garrison said about a dozen other states have some sort of broadband plan, and group members wanted to form one of their own. In the process they realized the statewide scope and importance of having an overall goal.

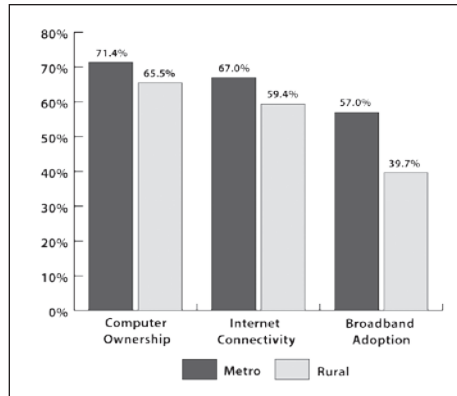
One can disagree about what's the proper speed or time limit, but Minnesota doesn't have a current plan and needs to set a policy goal of where it wants to be, he said.

The bill doesn't address the necessary funding to support such a goal, but is an attempt to bring people together to develop a policy that would allow the state to better compete with other states and countries, thereby allowing businesses to stay competitive globally, Garrison added. As an example, California has set a goal of achieving gigabit speeds (1 billion bits per second) by 2010, the same as Singapore, Garrison said.

Those testifying in favor of the bill say

"Our speeds are a fraction of what many other industrialized nations of the world are able to obtain."

— Tom Garrison,
Eagan Communications Director



Computer ownership, Internet connectivity and broadband adoption are still higher in the Twin Cities metropolitan area compared to the rest of Minnesota.

Chart courtesy of the Center for Rural Policy and Development

internationally recognized groups show the United States is falling behind as other countries increase their Internet access speeds allowing for bigger applications. A 2005 study by the International Telecommunications Union ranks the United States 16th in broadband penetration for economies, down three places from 2004.

A real life scenario showing the need could entail an at-home engineer trying to download or upload architectural specs from their Japan-based corporation. Depending on the size of the engineer's file, using a DSL line could take days or hours by cable modem. Current access speeds across the state have a form of broadband, but the access speeds are less than other countries. With the speed of broadband proposed in the bill, it could be as little as one minute to download those specs.

The Internet creation that initially enabled people to cross geographic boundaries is competitively disabling with the need for more bandwidth and faster processing speeds.

Big corporations have capital to install fiber optics, Wi-Fi or other technology needed to offer faster broadband capabilities, but small and home-based businesses across the country don't have

the funding to compete. Instead, they're limited to what local telecommunications companies offer.

Not able to wait for the state to address broadband concerns, several municipalities have given faster access speeds to residents by creating their own telecommunications providers.

In November 2000, 67 percent of Windom voters gave city leaders the authority to construct, purchase or acquire a telephone exchange. Now the city manages its own

Broadband in rural Minnesota

The availability of broadband in rural Minnesota, excluding Rochester, St. Cloud and Duluth, generally relates to socioeconomic status and availability, according to a report by the Center for Rural Policy and Development in St. Peter.

Jack Geller, president of the center, told the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division Feb. 16 that many rural areas in the state do have access to broadband technology, although 22 percent of rural respondents that connect to the Internet using dial up report lack of availability as the primary barrier to broadband adoption.

As a percentage, 39.4 percent of rural Minnesota has broadband in homes in 2006, while the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area is at 57 percent.

Broadband adoption is also significantly higher in the metropolitan area. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including age and income demographics and broadband availability, the report notes. The most cited reason for those who have the broadband option but choose dial up is the price difference.

telecommunications system, including door-to-door fiber optics.

At the time, there were no plans from Qwest Communications International Inc., the service carrier for the area, or any other company to provide high-speed Internet or a digital subscriber line, said Mayor Tom Riordan. Fed up with not having a choice, the residents developed a solution, he told the House Telecommunications Regulation and Infrastructure Division Jan. 26.

Similarly, Monticello established a Fiber Optics Task Force in 2005 to examine the possibilities of using city monies to build a fiber optics infrastructure for use by every home and business in the city. The city approached current area providers with fiber availability to every home in the area, and Monticello was told it was "not their vision," said Lynn Fleming, a member of the task force.

Monticello is now in the process of developing its own fiber optics infrastructure to allow for higher applications, she said. Presentations from the cities of Buffalo and Winona showed similar stories.

The bill was laid over by the division so various sectors can discuss ways to bring those goals to fruition, with the intention it will be further discussed next session. "At least we got the topic out with some type of goal and standards to start this," Masin said.

A companion bill, [SF1918](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

Another go for medical marijuana

Despite firm opposition, sponsors make another push for legislation

By MIA SIMPSON

As Kermit the Frog once sang, “It ain’t easy being green.” Medical marijuana legislation has a track record of failure in the House in at least six sessions past. This year’s version, [HF655](#), sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth), has survived three committee hearings so far — recently edging through the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division on a 7-6 roll call vote March 31.

However, many remain fiercely opposed to the bill, arguing that the risks of partial legalization, even for the sake of medical use, far outweigh the benefits.

Proponents

Therein lies the crux of the debate: should Minnesota make an illegal substance available to a minority, possibly at the expense of the majority? Under the bill, the group that would be eligible for this treatment are people with “chronic or debilitating diseases,” such as cancer, HIV, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis or intractable pain (defined as pain that has not responded to alternative treatments within six months).

Proponents argue that in some of these cases, conventional treatment just won’t work, and such patients currently choose to smoke marijuana despite threat of prosecution.

Thus the need for legislation, they say.

“We present this with the goal of helping sick and dying Minnesotans ... who are right now using

marijuana to elevate their pain and risking arrest to do it,” said Neal Levine, director of Minnesotans for Compassionate Care, during a House Health and Human Services Committee hearing March 8.

The bill would grant patients suffering from certain medical conditions lawful possession of marijuana so long as it’s recommended by

a physician. Patients would then register with the state on an annual basis, and receive an identification card, which they would present to an organization certified to grow plants — though the nonprofit could not begin producing the drug until it is requested by a patient.

This is a change from original language, which would have permitted a patient or a registered caregiver to grow up to 12 plants in their home. One amendment removed the right to reciprocity, which would allow cardholders from other states to obtain marijuana in Minnesota. Inserted language proposed by [Rep. Tina Leibling](#) (DFL-

Rochester), would prevent patients from smoking the drug in areas where children could inhale it.

“This is a tightly-crafted bill,” said [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon), who switched his position on the legislation this year, after researching the issue. “In this case, it has been the facts and information that I’ve been made aware of that changed my perspective completely.”



Opponents

But opponents aren’t appeased. They contest marijuana’s medical efficacy, and say consequences, should the bill pass, for law enforcement, teens and the state as a whole can’t be ignored.

“Marijuana has been proved to be a harmful

drug, and legalizing it in any way will increase the harm this will do to our society,” said Mitch Weinzetl, president of the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association.

Becoming the 12th state to enact such legislation would result in several things, he warned. First, it would put Minnesota at odds with federal law, which does not legally consent to medical marijuana use. The Drug Enforcement Administration classifies marijuana as a Schedule I narcotic, the most dangerous of the five identified categories, making users subject to criminal penalties.

Second, law enforcement officials believe it would confuse youth, who have been consistently taught that marijuana use is wrong and illegal.

This is the reason [Rep. Rod Hamilton](#) (R-Mountain Lake) opposes the bill. Last year, Hamilton announced he had multiple sclerosis, a condition that could be treated by marijuana. He recalls the conversation he had with his two children:

“My son, who’s 15, said, ‘You know what, Dad, if there’s anything out there that can make you feel better, I support it.’”

His 12-year-old daughter quickly quipped back, “Even if it makes Dad a pothead?”

Bottom line, Hamilton said, “I’m a parent first and an MS patient second.”

Some members also say that if marijuana is indeed a miracle worker for some, the Federal Drug Administration should be the one to bless it.

“We’re trying to do in this state what the FDA is charged with doing,” [Rep. Steve Gottwalt](#) (R-St. Cloud) said during the House Health Care and Human Services Finance Division meeting March 31. “Let them approve it. We do this for every other drug available.”

The House Finance Committee will see the bill next. If the measure would reach the governor’s desk, he has promised a veto.

The Senate companion, [SF345](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.



Friday, April 13

HF2422-Clark (DFL)

Taxes

Alcohol health impact fund established, and alcohol health impact fee imposed.

HF2423-Kelliher (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Companion dogs; municipalities authorized to enact ordinances allowing dogs to accompany persons patronizing outdoor areas of food and beverage establishments.

HF2424-Nelson (DFL)

Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections

Public employee retirement directors' salary limits provided and retirement associations board of trustees duties modified.

HF2425-Hilstrom (DFL)

Taxes

Kidney dialysis equipment sales tax exemption provided.

HF2426-Norton (DFL)

Health & Human Services

Disabled children human services eligibility re-termination notice required.

HF2427-Paulsen (R)

Health & Human Services

Health Information Technology and Infrastructure Advisory Committee requirements expanded.

HF2428-Rukavina (DFL)

Finance

Eveleth wastewater treatment plant renovation funding provided and bonds issued.

Monday, April 16

HF2429-Westrom (R)

Taxes

Douglas County sales tax authorized to fund a county jail and law enforcement center.

HF2430-Sertich (DFL)

Finance

Hibbing sewer and water extensions funding provided, bonds issued.

HF2431-Nornes (R)

Finance

Vergas; Roger Hanson Memorial Trail completion funding provided, bonds issued.

HF2432-Abeler (R)

Health & Human Services

Evidence-based health care guidelines provided, provider performance evaluations regulated, voluntary purchasing pool requirements modified and health promotion and wellness provided.

Tuesday, April 17

HF2433-Marquart (DFL)

Finance

Browns Valley flood relief funding provided.

Wednesday, April 18

HF2434-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Tax increment financing technical and minor policy changes provided.

HF2435-Sviggg (R)

Taxes

Goodview water treatment facilities construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

Thursday, April 19

HF2436-Wollschlager (DFL)

Energy Finance & Policy Division

Nuclear waste; a resolution memorializing Congress regarding nuclear waste storage.

HF2437-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Driver's license vision-screening standards study required.

HF2438-Dettmer (R)

Taxes

Centerville; property located within certain tax increment financing districts is not commercial industrial property for purposes of metropolitan revenue distribution.

HF2439-Dettmer (R)

Taxes

Centerville; sales tax exemption provided for construction materials and equipment used to construct improvements in certain tax increment financing districts.

HF2440-Hausman (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota State Fair; fish habitat educational display bonds authorized.

HF2441-Davnie (DFL)

Taxes

Sales definition modified from performance of services for regulated investment companies under the apportionment formula.

HF2442-Kahn (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

State Lottery authorized to offer games involving sports wagering and wagering pools; bookmaking authorized under licenses issued by director of the State Lottery; licensed bookmaking tax imposed and Minnesota active recreation fund created.

HF2443-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes

Card club operations gross receipts tax imposed and combined receipts tax on gambling reduced.

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2007-08 Minnesota House of Representatives

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48B	Abeler, Jim (R)	203	1729	40B	Lenczewski, Ann (DFL)	509	4218
19A	Anderson, Bruce (R)	201	5063	66A	Lesch, John (DFL)	537	4224
43A	Anderson, Sarah (R)	229	5511	30A	Liebling, Tina (DFL)	393	0573
3A	Anzelc, Tom (DFL)	417	4936	1B	Lieder, Bernard (DFL)	423	5091
39B	Atkins, Joe (DFL)	503	4192	55A	Lillie, Leon (DFL)	353	1188
35A	Beard, Michael (R)	207	8872	59A	Loeffler, Diane (DFL)	349	4219
43B	Benson, John (DFL)	517	9934	37A	Madore, Shelley (DFL)	507	5506
33B	Berns, John (R)	311	4315	22A	Magnus, Doug (R)	217	5505
57A	Bigham, Karla (DFL)	529	4342	67A	Mahoney, Tim (DFL)	591	4277
25B	Bly, David (DFL)	557	7065	65B	Mariani, Carlos (DFL)	563	9714
25A	Brod, Laura (R)	321	4229	9B	Marquart, Paul (DFL)	597	6829
27A	Brown, Robin (DFL)	337	8216	38A	Masin, Sandra (DFL)	527	3533
23B	Brynaert, Kathy (DFL)	421	3248	53B	McFarlane, Carol (R)	223	5363
35B	Buesgens, Mark (R)	307	5185	57B	McNamara, Denny (R)	271	3135
56A	Bunn, Julie (DFL)	521	4244	4A	Moe, Frank (DFL)	369	5516
45B	Carlson, Lyndon (DFL)	479	4255	40A	Morgan, Will (DFL)	531	4212
61A	Clark, Karen (DFL)	471	0294	23A	Morrow, Terry (DFL)	415	8634
24B	Cornish, Tony (R)	281	4240	58A	Mullery, Joe (DFL)	367	4262
62A	Davnie, Jim (DFL)	545	0173	64A	Murphy, Erin (DFL)	413	8799
52B	Dean, Matt (R)	327	3018	6B	Murphy, Mary (DFL)	343	2676
49A	DeLaForest, Chris (R)	323	4231	46A	Nelson, Michael V.(DFL)	569	3751
29A	Demmer, Randy (R)	225	9236	10A	Nornes, Bud (R)	277	4946
52A	Dettmer, Bob (R)	329	4124	29B	Norton, Kim (DFL)	387	9249
6A	Dill, David (DFL)	571	2190	1A	Olin, Dave (DFL)	593	9635
47A	Dittrich, Denise (DFL)	371	5513	16B	Olson, Mark (R)	301	4237
58B	Dominguez, Augustine "Willie" (DFL)	539	8659	11B	Otremba, Mary Ellen (DFL)	445	3201
12B	Doty, Al (DFL)	433	4247	37B	Ozment, Dennis (R)	283	4306
17A	Eastlund, Rob (R)	243	5364	42B	Paulsen, Erik (R)	309	7449
2A	Eken, Kent (DFL)	575	9918	64B	Paymar, Michael (DFL)	543	4199
19B	Emmer, Tom (R)	261	4336	31A	Pelowski Jr., Gene (DFL)	491	8637
41A	Erhardt, Ron (R)	245	4363	32A	Peppin, Joyce (R)	331	7806
16A	Erickson, Sondra (R)	279	6746	20A	Peterson, Aaron (DFL)	451	4228
8B	Faust, Tim (DFL)	567	0518	41B	Peterson, Neil W. (R)	213	7803
21B	Finstad, Brad (R)	251	9303	45A	Peterson, Sandra (DFL)	345	4176
26B	Fritz, Patti (DFL)	551	8237	27B	Poppe, Jeanne (DFL)	487	4193
53A	Gardner, Paul (DFL)	581	2907	5A	Rukavina, Tom (DFL)	477	0170
36B	Garofalo, Pat (R)	221	1069	26A	Ruth, Connie (R)	291	5368
15A	Gottwalt, Steve (R)	231	6316	42A	Ruud, Maria (DFL)	515	3964
54A	Greiling, Mindy (DFL)	381	5387	2B	Sailer, Brita (DFL)	577	4265
24A	Gunther, Bob (R)	289	3240	54B	Scalze, Bev (DFL)	357	7153
48A	Hackbarth, Tom (R)	209	2439	21A	Seifert, Marty (R)	267	5374
22B	Hamilton, Rod (R)	215	5373	5B	Sertich, Anthony "Tony" (DFL)	459	0172
39A	Hansen, Rick (DFL)	401	6828	14A	Severson, Dan (R)	233	7808
66B	Hausman, Alice (DFL)	453	3824	18A	Shimanski, Ron (R)	227	1534
15B	Haws, Larry (DFL)	473	6612	44A	Simon, Steve (DFL)	375	9889
13A	Heidgerken, Bud (R)	237	4317	10B	Simpson, Dean (R)	295	4293
46B	Hilstrom, Debra (DFL)	379	3709	55B	Slawik, Nora (DFL)	403	7807
8A	Hilty, Bill (DFL)	559	4308	63B	Slocum, Linda (DFL)	523	7158
36A	Holberg, Mary Liz (R)	303	6926	33A	Smith, Steve (R)	253	9188
34B	Hoppe, Joe (R)	317	5066	3B	Solberg, Loren (DFL)	443	2365
60B	Hornstein, Frank (DFL)	437	9281	28B	Sviggum, Steve (R)	247	2273
47B	Hortman, Melissa (DFL)	377	4280	56B	Swails, Marsha (DFL)	409	1147
14B	Hosch, Larry (DFL)	565	4373	65A	Thao, Cy (DFL)	359	5158
4B	Howes, Larry (R)	287	2451	63A	Thissen, Paul (DFL)	351	5375
7A	Huntley, Thomas (DFL)	585	2228	51B	Tillberry, Tom (DFL)	501	5510
7B	Jaros, Mike (DFL)	583	4246	49B	Tingelstad, Kathy (R)	255	5369
67B	Johnson, Sheldon (DFL)	549	4201	31B	Tschumper, Ken (DFL)	431	9278
13B	Juhnke, Al (DFL)	485	6206	18B	Urdahl, Dean (R)	239	4344
59B	Kahn, Phyllis (DFL)	365	4257	62B	Wagenius, Jean (DFL)	449	4200
17B	Kalin, Jeremy (DFL)	579	5377	61B	Walker, Neva (DFL)	553	7152
60A	Kelliher, Margaret Anderson (DFL)	463	0171	12A	Ward, John (DFL)	533	4333
50B	Knuth, Kate (DFL)	429	0141	38B	Wardlow, Lynn (R)	241	4128
20B	Koenen, Lyle (DFL)	439	4346	30B	Walti, Andy (DFL)	389	4378
34A	Kohls, Paul (R)	313	4282	11A	Westrom, Torrey (R)	273	4929
51A	Kranz, Scott (DFL)	411	4226	44B	Winkler, Ryan (DFL)	525	7026
50A	Laine, Carolyn (DFL)	407	4331	28A	Wollschlager, Sandy (DFL)	335	8635
9A	Lanning, Morrie (R)	259	5515	32B	Zellers, Kurt (R)	315	5502

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Jan. 9, 2007

Highlights continued from page 7

it out. Most people in area want the property used and don't want it destroyed, he said.

The bill was passed by the House Finance Committee April 16, and now awaits action on the House floor. A companion bill, [SF585](#), sponsored by [Sen. Paul Koering](#) (R-Fort Ripley), passed the Senate 65-0 on March 23.

[Rep. Joyce Peppin](#) (R-Rogers) said, from reading the Little Falls newspaper, the issue generated heated debate at city council meetings.

"Because the city is in favor of it, we should vote on it; but I need to do more research," she said.

— S. HEGMAN

Change in housing authorities

If [HF1161/SF1045](#)* becomes law, two housing authorities would undergo minor changes.

Sponsored by [Rep. Paul Kohls](#) (R-Victoria) and [Sen. Julianne Ortman](#) (R-Chanhassen), the bill would change the name of the Scott County Housing and Redevelopment Authority to the Scott County Community Development Program.

Also, as a result of an amendment offered by [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka), the city of Anoka would be allowed to provide their own provisions for the appointment of city housing and redevelopment authority commissioners.

The bill passed the Senate 60-0 on March 19, and passed the House 130-0 on April 12. The bill

has since returned to the Senate with Abeler's amendment, where it now awaits action.

— C. GREEN

Scott County personnel policies

Minnesota has an extremely effective and efficient personnel system that provides fair treatment to its applicants. Scott County would like to see if the system could work for their administration as well, Rep. Michael Beard (R-Shakopee) said.

[HF1490](#), sponsored by Beard, would permit the county to put into place a pilot program of interviewing and hiring procedures similar to the state's.

The bill would allow Scott County to:

- administer a new employee recruitment system;
- establish new rules for creating and monitoring applicant pools;
- establish a merit system, taking into account modern business practices; and
- establish procedures for disciplinary action.

"We'd like to run with it for a couple of years and see if it works," Beard said.

The bill passed the House 130-0 on April 12, and now awaits action by the Senate, where it is sponsored by [Sen. Claire Robling](#) (R-Jordan).

— C. GREEN

St. Louis County appointments

Commissioners in one northeastern county may soon have an easier time with making appointments.

[HF1432/SF1133](#)*, sponsored by [Rep. Thomas Huntley](#) (DFL-Duluth) and [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), would allow the St. Louis County Board of Commissioners to appoint a civil service director to serve in the unclassified service. Revising current statute, the bill would eliminate a detailed appointment process which included the creation of an examination committee.

The bill passed the House 130-0 on April 12 and the Senate 65-0 on March 23. It now awaits approval from Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

— C. GREEN

METRO AFFAIRS

Updating the Land Planning Act

Changes to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act are closer to becoming law with the passage of [HF881](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), the bill would clarify the 30-year-old act, eliminating outdated and erroneous references.

According to Judd Schetnan, government affairs director for the Metropolitan Council, HF881 is a "housekeeping bill" with no substantive policy changes that would be good for local governments and good for the council.

The bill passed the House 90-40 on April 12, and now awaits action by the Senate, where it is sponsored by [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope).

— C. GREEN

Warming continued from page 4

remember that we have a huge wave out there — Steger, Gore, global warming, energy conservation, a move away from fossil fuels, vehicle emissions reductions and so forth. You

better climb on board, because that's the way the ship is moving, folks."

The Global Warming Mitigation Act awaits action by the full House and by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee. It has also

been incorporated into [HF436](#), sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), which awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion, [SF145](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the full Senate. 🗽

Development continued from page 13

information such as duties, hours and wages must be provided to employees in the employee's native language.

The bill also calls for an ombudsman position to inspect and review state meatpacking operations to ensure workers have, among other things, the right to unionize, the opportunity to use adequate facilities and the right to be free from discrimination.

Several Republicans echoed [Rep. Doug](#)

[Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) that the provision was "a solution in search of a problem."

"This isn't a problem that exists. So why are we going to add on another layer of regulation? Actual numbers of injuries are decreasing," [Rep. Kurt Zellers](#) (R-Maple Grove) said.

Consumers

Right to information regarding call centers is also addressed in the bill. A Minnesota resident who receives a customer service call would need to be informed of the state or

country where the customer service employee is located. Additionally, if identifying information or credit numbers are requested, the resident would have the right to request that the call be handled in the United States, if possible. 🗽

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MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Minnesota's wild

Minnesotans who partake in birdwatching each year, as percent of state's population.....	40
Estimated amount spent doing so, in millions.....	\$360
Number of designated birding trails in Minnesota.....	3
Estimated number of birding sites along the Mississippi River in the state	100
Size of Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge east of Holt, in acres	61,500
Estimated number of bird species found there.....	280
Estimated number of raptors that migrate during the fall along Duluth's Hawk Ridge.....	93,000
Estimated number of ring-necked ducks that stop at Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge near McGregor each fall	300,000
Average weight of a mallard, in pounds.....	2.5-3
Size, in estimated acres, of St. Croix State Park, the state's largest state park, east of Hinckley.....	34,000
Species of frogs and toads along the Mississippi River in southern Minnesota	12
Species of butterflies, as approximate, at Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie near Lake Benton.....	25
Hibernating bats, as approximate, that winter in Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park between Spring Valley and Preston.....	2,000
Species of warblers best seen during early May at Frontenac State Park southeast of Red Wing.....	32
Approximate breeding pairs of American white pelicans at the largest colony in North America in Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area/State Park near Watson.....	17,000
Swans, as estimate, that now spend their winters on the Mississippi River near Monticello where warm water released from the power plant keeps a stretch of water open.....	1,000
Year trumpeter swans were completely eliminated by state settlers before making a comeback.....	1890
Pairs of bald eagles that nest in Minnesota	680
Estimated number of injured eagles, falcons, hawks and owls treated annually by The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota.....	800
Since 1996, average percent of bald eagles admitted to The Raptor Center each year that have toxic levels of lead in their blood.....	25
Number of deer registered to hunters in Minnesota in 2005.....	255,736
Rank in state history totals.....	3
Pheasants per 100 miles during an August 2006 roadside study	113.8
Percent above the 10-year average	75
Estimated moose population in northeastern Minnesota during a January 2006 study.....	7,272
State's wild turkey population, as estimate	30,000

— M. COOK

Sources: Minnesota Wildlife 2005-2006, [Explore Minnesota Tourism](#); [Minnesota Ornithologists' Union](#); [The Raptor Center](#); [Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife](#).

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