

SESSION WEEKLY



A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 7 • FEBRUARY 16, 2007

**WINDS OF CHANGE
LIGHTS IN THE SKY
HONORING DUTY**

HF802- HF1062

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2007-2008 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

To subscribe, contact:
Minnesota House of Representatives
Public Information Services
175 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550 or the
Minnesota Relay service at 711 or
(800) 627-3529 (TTY)
www.house.mn/hinfo/subscribesw.asp

Director

Barry LaGrave

Editor/Assistant Director

Lee Ann Schutz

Assistant Editor

Mike Cook

Art & Production Coordinator

Paul Battaglia

Writers

Nick Busse, Craig Green,
Stephen Harding, Sonja Hegman,
Patty Ostberg, Mia Simpson

Chief Photographer

Tom Olmscheid

Photographers

Andrew VonBank, Sarah Stacke

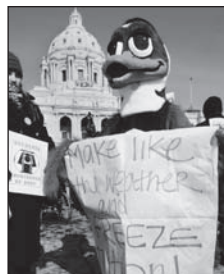
Staff Assistants

Christy Novak, Joan Bosard

Session Weekly (ISSN 1049-8176) is published weekly during the legislative session by Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Session Weekly*, House Public Information Services, 175 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155-1298.

Printed on recycled paper which is 50% recycled, 30% post-consumer content.



CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS

Agriculture • 5
Bioscience • 5
Bonding • 6
Consumers • 6
Crime • 7
Education • 7

Elections • 9
Employment • 9
Energy • 10
Gambling • 10
Game & Fish • 10
Greater Minnesota • 11

Health & Human Services • 12
Housing • 13
Humanities • 13
Military • 13
Taxes • 15
Transportation • 15

BILL INTRODUCTIONS (HF802-HF1062) • 18 - 23

FEATURES

FIRST READING: Cleaner energy — some say it's too much, too soon • 3-4

PROCESS: Committee deadlines set • 4

PEOPLE: New members profiled: Berns and Gardner • 17

FIFTY STATES: Politicians access Super Bowl tickets • 23

MINNESOTA INDEX: The friendly skies • 24

On the cover: Lydia Johnson, 5, smiles as her mother, Carla Johnson, tells the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division Feb. 13, about their experiences when they attended the District 197 Early Childhood Family Education program.

—Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



Winds of change

Bill aims for cleaner energy; some say it's too much, too soon

PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Windmills along the Buffalo Ridge region in Southwestern Minnesota.

By NICK BUSSE

According to [Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton), the climate has changed — at the Capitol, that is.

Peterson said he's been working to enact a renewable energy standard for Minnesota since he was first elected in 2002. For four years, he was out of luck. But with new leadership at the House and [Gov. Tim Pawlenty](#) publicly supporting an aggressive renewable energy package, he's confident this will be the year.

"I've seen it turn. This used to be the 'bad bill.' Nobody wanted to do it," Peterson said.

[HF4/SF4](#), which Peterson sponsors along with [Sen. Ellen Anderson](#) (DFL-St. Paul), would gradually increase the percentage of the state's electricity that comes from wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable energy sources to at least 25 percent by 2025. Xcel Energy, the state's largest power company, would face an even tougher standard of at least 30 percent by 2020.

Peterson characterized it as "the most aggressive renewable energy standard in the United States" relative to the size of states' electricity markets.

"We have the responsibility, I believe, to

my generation and those to follow, to take aggressive positions on technologies that are doable, that have been done, and can be done aggressively and prudently without disrupting the market," Peterson said.

If it becomes law, the standard would represent a significant leap over the state's current "renewable energy objective" of 10 percent by 2015.

The difference in terminology is key: whereas the "objective" requires that electric utility companies make a "good faith effort," the proposed "standard" is a mandate that would allow the state to financially penalize companies that fail to comply.

The bill also includes a flexible credit system, whereby companies that exceed the

standards can sell credits to companies that don't.

The Senate passed the bill 61-4 on Feb. 7. It is scheduled to be taken up on the House floor Feb. 19, and if it passes, will likely be headed to the governor's desk soon after.

Proponents of the measure say it will help reduce carbon emissions, to which many scientists attribute global warming. In addition, supporters of a renewable energy standard claim that it will add thousands of manufacturing jobs in the state, revitalize rural Minnesota and lower the cost of electricity.

Critics of the bill not only refute many of these claims, but also say that the bill

First Reading continued on page 4

places an undue burden on the state's power companies. They contend that wind power — which will constitute the bulk of the new energy — is fundamentally unreliable, and that consumers will end up paying the price.

Cost and feasibility

Pros and cons aside, some say a 25 percent by 2025 standard is simply demanding too much of the state's power companies.

One problem is transmission.

Terry Grove, co-executive director of CapX 2020 (short for "Capacity Expansion by 2020"), said that a 25 percent mandate would flood the state's energy market with an extra 5,700 megawatts of renewable electricity. Without new power lines, Grove said he isn't sure the state's electric transmission infrastructure can handle it. Moreover, he said modifying that infrastructure in such a short period of time would be a "tall order."

Similarly, Greg Oxley, government relations director for the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association, which carries approximately 14 percent of the state's electricity load, said that the proposed standard is "a bridge too far." Testifying before the House Energy Finance and Policy Division Feb. 5, Oxley estimates the state would need a new "six to seven very big transmission lines" going from west to east to accommodate the additional power.

Pressed by a question from [Rep. Kate Knuth](#) (DFL-New Brighton), Oxley admitted that his estimate is based on "sheer speculation"; however, he cautioned that speculation is all anybody has to offer on the issue.

"We haven't had time to do the kinds of studies that we need to do to make this happen," Oxley said.

Peterson acknowledges that the state's transmission system would need to be upgraded; however, he points to the key findings of the recently completed Minnesota Wind Integration Study, which states that Minnesota's electric utilities could reliably accommodate up to 25 percent wind power with minimal cost to consumers.

John Dunlop, senior outreach representative for the American Wind Energy Association, said that contrary to popular belief, higher renewable energy standards actually result in lower electricity prices by inviting new companies into the market and creating competition.

"If you establish a standard, it really invites competition, and that competition tends to keep the prices down," Dunlop said.

Creating jobs

Another selling point of the bill is the possibility of bringing new jobs to the state.

Testifying Feb. 5, Lynn Hinkle, a representative of United Auto Workers Local 879, said that a renewable energy standard would create a massive and immediate need for wind turbines. That would encourage the companies that make these turbines to set up shop in rural Minnesota, where most of the turbines would likely be located.

Hinkle said that Germany, which generates approximately 16,000 megawatts of wind power, currently has 40,000 workers directly involved in manufacturing and installing wind turbines. Minnesota, which would have to add approximately 5,700 megawatts of wind power, would likely add somewhere around 14,000 "core manufacturing jobs," he said.

Peterson admits that fostering economic development in rural Minnesota is one of his primary goals.

"I want my part of the state to stay connected to the state economy," he said.

[Rep. Mike Beard](#) (R-Shakopee), however, isn't sure that's a good enough reason to burden the state's power companies with strict and potentially costly regulations.

"We have this mistaken impression that these are hugely lucrative companies, just because they're big, and therefore we can soak 'em," Beard said during a Feb. 12 division hearing.

Meeting goals

Critics of the bill have also pointed out that it might not actually live up to its stated goal of reducing carbon emissions. Betsy Engelking, manager of resource planning and bidding for Xcel Energy, said the legislation would keep her company's carbon emissions at roughly

their 2005 levels for the next 25 years — but not decrease them.

Also, Beard notes that because of the inherent unreliability of wind power — no one can predict how much wind there will be on a given day — power from wind turbines has to be backed up by coal plants, which will make reducing carbon emissions more difficult.

Opinions on the issue differ, however. Statistics compiled by Clean Energy Minnesota indicate that the renewable standard proposed by the bill would decrease the state's overall carbon emissions by more than 4 million tons annually.

Regardless, Peterson admits that more legislation will be needed in the future, both in Minnesota and around the world, to decrease carbon emissions, but said he considers the bill a good first step down that road.

"We can do our part," he said. 

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

House Public Information Services	
175 State Office Building	296-2146
Chief Clerk of the House	
211 Capitol	296-2314
House Index	
211 Capitol	296-6646
Toll free	(800) 657-3550
Senate Information	
231 Capitol	296-0504
TTY, Senate	296-0250
Toll free	(888) 234-1112
Secretary of the Senate	
231 Capitol	296-2344
Voice mail/order bills	296-2343
Senate Index	
110 Capitol	296-5560

Committee deadlines set

A new session means a new set of committee deadlines.

According to [Joint Rules](#), "The Legislature shall establish by concurrent resolution deadlines for each regular session. The deadlines do not apply to the House committees on Capital Investment, Ways and Means, Taxes, or Rules and Legislative Administration, nor to the Senate committees on Capital Investment, Finance, Taxes, or Rules and Administration."

Approved by the House Feb. 15, deadlines for the 2007 legislative session are:

- **Friday, March 23** — First and second deadlines in the House.
- **Monday, April 2 at 2 p.m.** — Divisions of the House Finance Committee and the Senate must act favorably on omnibus appropriation bills.
- **Saturday, April 14** — First and second deadlines in the Senate.
- **Friday, April 27** — House speaker and Senate majority leader must establish joint revenue and expenditure limits for actions in conference committees.

According to [House Majority Leader Tony Sertich](#) (DFL-Chisholm), the Senate is addressing

fiscal bills first, then policy issues, while the House is operating with the traditional model of policy bills first, then fiscal bills.

With the deadlines, March 23 will be the last day to pass policy bills in House divisions or committees, and, according to Sertich, "all fiscal bills will have to be out of their divisions to the finance committee on Monday, April 2 at 2 p.m. In the Senate, all fiscal bills have to be off the Senate floor on that day. The Senate did want to have another policy deadline; their policy deadline is Saturday, April 14. So they're working down the same roads, they're in different lanes, if you will, but we will come to a conclusion at the same time, get to conference committee and get our targets on the same day to end the session."

[Rep. Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) unsuccessfully offered an amendment to move the final deadline to April 16. [Rep. Mark Olson](#) (R-Big Lake) unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have given conference committees two weeks after the final deadline to get their work done; thereby, leaving six days, not including Sundays or the final day, for House and Senate approval of those reports.

Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees held Feb. 8-15 and other House activity. To track the progress of a bill, go to www.leg.state.mn and click on Bill Search, Status and MyBills.

AGRICULTURE

Next Generation fuels

Minnesota's ethanol industry supports more than 10,300 jobs, and Gov. Tim Pawlenty's [NexGen BioEnergy Initiative](#) could fuel the next generation of biofuels, resulting in even more job growth.

Gene Hugoson, commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, explained to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Feb. 13 one provision in the initiative that looks beyond corn-based ethanol to the use of cellulosic materials such as grass, straw and wood to provide other types of fuel. No action was taken.

The state needs to think beyond just ethanol to other biofuels, he said. "While we are seeing a high demand for ethanol and the price reflects that, we could turn that around very quickly and see a different scenario in the near future."

He said that once the 77 ethanol plants currently under construction nationwide are up and running, 6.1 billion gallons will be added into the pipeline, but demand is projected to stay flat.

The use of cellulosic materials could jumpstart a whole new biofuel industry creating more demand, he said.

Under Pawlenty's proposal, \$5 million in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 would provide incentives to "spur the development of facilities to produce fuels derived from biomass or cellulosic materials such as grasses, wood products and straw." Funding for the proposal would jump to \$9 million in fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Grants would be provided to ethanol facilities to help make the switch from natural gas to cellulosic materials as their fuel source. Hugoson said this would move the state in the direction of eventually being able to use this material in ethanol production.

[Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton) advocated for a comprehensive bill to deal with the governor's initiative rather than what he sees is a "piecemeal" approach being taken by the House. "I sure don't want to see agriculture

get the icky end of the stick come toward the end of May."

[Rep. Aaron Peterson](#) (DFL-Appleton) disagreed with that approach. "Doesn't it make sense that it's appropriate that certain parts of the package be reviewed by the appropriate committees and then keep open the option of rolling it all together?"

More research for organics

While organic growers and producers have been changing their methods of farming to answer the increasing demand for their products, they have had to rely mostly on one another for best-practice information.

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Ken Tschumper](#) (DFL-La Crescent) would help make the [University of Minnesota](#) a "national and international leader in organic agricultural research."

"Minnesota farmers understand the opportunities that organic production represents," he told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee Feb. 14. A bill he sponsors, [HF844](#), calls for a "significant commitment for education and research in the field of organics."

Approved and referred to the House Finance Committee, the bill would appropriate \$2.2 million in the next biennium to the university to establish and maintain a statewide organic research and education initiative. It has no Senate companion.

Funds would provide for three full-time faculty positions to lead organic agronomic, horticultural, livestock and food systems research; education; and outreach. Approximately \$300,000 in each fiscal year would be allocated for new technical support staff at the university's St. Paul campus; UMore Park near Rosemount; and the research and outreach centers in Lamberton, Waseca, Morris and Crookston. About \$250,000 in each fiscal year would be available for graduate assistantships to support organic research, and \$200,000 in the biennium would be available for new equipment.

Atina Diffley, along with her husband, has operated Gardens of Eagan Organic Vegetable Farm since 1973. They are one of the earliest certified organic producers in the state.

"When we started there were no universities with organic education or research programs. We had little support developing healthy, high yielding organic systems for our farm," she said. Soil issues regarding organics are complicated, and education and research

Correction

In last week's Session Weekly we incorrectly stated that Rep. Sandra Masin (DFL-Eagan) was a Republican member. We apologize for the error.

are crucial as more farmers look to the alternative.

Interpretive center funding

Teaching students the basics of farming as a part of Minnesota's heritage is the basis of a bill held over Feb. 12 by the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder), [HF388](#) would appropriate \$250,000 in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to the Minnesota Agricultural Interpretive Center, or FarmAmerica as it is also known.

Cornish said that the Waseca center is currently functioning on a "bare bones" budget and wants an increase from its \$128,000 annual appropriation. This amount is also in the governor's proposed budget. One of three interpretive centers in the state, Cornish said it has not received the funds the other two centers have. It does receive \$136,000 in grants and donations per year.

The center has two full-time employees and a quarter-time executive director, but 450 volunteers help service the 16,000 to 18,000 annual visitors. With the \$500,000 biennial base funding from the state, the center would be able to hire a full-time executive director and a program director, said Bill Hoversten, a FarmAmerica board member.

Barb Maher, director of volunteers, said many children today have no idea what farming is. She said many students don't know that milk comes from cows or eggs come from chickens.

A companion bill, [SF531](#), sponsored by [Sen. Julie Rosen](#) (R-Fairmont), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

BIOSCIENCE

Investing in biobusiness

A bill approved by a House committee would provide \$2.2 million to the BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota to help "promote and position the state as a global leader in bioscience business activities."

[HF618](#), sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#)

(DFL-Golden Valley), was approved by the House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee and now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Dale Wahlstrom, board chair of the alliance, said the money would be used to support new local bioscience companies, encourage out-of-state bioscience companies to relocate in Minnesota, and develop overall strategic plans for bioscience business development in the state.

Winkler said a large portion of the money would go toward funding a “systems dynamics modeling project” that would help the state strategically target its future investments and/or policy initiatives in bioscience.

“It will help, I think, drive better decision making ... because it actually gives some pretty solid data and information ahead of time to understand what the impact of those decisions will be,” Winkler said.

A companion bill, [SF737](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Soliciting federal dollars

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) thinks Minnesota’s bioscience and technology businesses aren’t doing enough to take advantage of federal funds; a bill he sponsors aims to help them do just that.

[HF452](#) would appropriate \$750,000 to the [Department of Employment and Economic Development](#) to establish a “technology and commercialization unit” that would coordinate “public and private efforts to procure federal funding for collaborative research and development projects,” with an emphasis on small- and medium-sized businesses.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bill Feb. 14. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

According to Mahoney, similar programs already exist in 33 states.

“Minnesota is in a catch-up mode on a lot of our [research and development] and our high-tech industry,” Mahoney said. “We need to do a better job with our entrepreneurial companies that do focus on research and development.”

As an example of the money that could be tapped, he said that in this year’s budget alone, the Department of Homeland Security will dole out nearly \$39 million in contracts and grants for food protection and defense.

[Rep. Julie Bunn](#) (DFL-Lake Elmo) suggested that instead of having states create whole agencies to solicit federal money, the federal government ought to make the contracting and grant process more transparent.

“I am not going to run up against the wall trying to fix federal issues,” Mahoney replied.

Worthington training center

The city of Worthington would get \$2 million in state funds for an agricultural-based bioscience training facility, if a bill approved by a House committee becomes law.

[HF535](#), sponsored by [Rep. Rod Hamilton](#) (R-Mountain Lake), would help finance the completion of an “incubator” for bioscience companies — a facility that not only provides lab space but also trains new local workers.

“We want to express the importance of developing a high-quality workforce, to not only grow the local companies but to attract new companies out there in rural Minnesota,” Hamilton said.

The House Biosciences and Emerging Technology Committee approved the bill Feb. 13. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF433](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Vickerman](#) (DFL-Tracy), has been held over for possible inclusion in the Senate Economic Development Budget Division’s omnibus bill.

Glenn Thuringer, manager of the Worthington Regional Economic Development Corporation, said that if approved by the Legislature, the bulk of the funds would go specifically toward job training, especially for jobs involving the development of new biofields.

“What we’re seeking is the state to support developing a training and testing center to feature incubator space, labs, classrooms and offices,” Thuringer said, adding that “having all these entities in one location” would help nurture new companies.

Wayne Freese, CEO of the Worthington-based Prairie Holdings Group, said the city of 12,000 people is rapidly becoming a hub for bioscience industries, with a new soy diesel plant, a new ethanol plant, numerous medical clinics and a bioscience business park either already constructed or in the works.

BONDING

Stillwater levee project

The city of Stillwater is asking the state for assistance to complete a flood prevention project.

Sponsored by [Rep. Matt Dean](#) (R-Dellwood), [HF407](#) would appropriate \$200,000 for phase three of the project designed to protect the historic downtown from flooding, which has happened 17 times since 1937. This amount

is intended to get the city through the 2007 construction season only. The appropriation is in the governor’s budget proposal.

The \$200,000 would be one-half of the non-federal matching funds required for the construction. The city is asking only for matching funds for which federal funds have already been appropriated. The city would provide the other half of the match. The total cost of the final phase is estimated at \$5 million.

Stillwater Mayor Ken Harycki told the House Capital Investment Finance Division Feb. 13 that the flooding started when the Corps of Engineers built Lock and Dam No. 3 on the Mississippi River in 1937, causing the St. Croix River to flood the city. Some of the floods have been disastrous, the most recent causing floods on Main Street with sewers backing up and water seepage, he said.

In the final stage of the project, a 3-foot berm and flood wall would be built 125 feet inland from the riverbank. Sheet piling would be driven below the surface to reduce seepage and provide a base for the wall.

The bill was held over by the division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF367](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury), is awaiting action by the Senate Finance Committee.

CONSUMERS

Made in the USA

People holding Fourth of July gatherings might be surprised to see where their American flag paper plate was actually made, or a flag pin or patch on a jacket.

Millions of dollars worth of American flag merchandise is imported yearly, [Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) told the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 13. He sponsors [HF122](#) which would prohibit the selling of “an American flag or a novelty or other item containing a representation of the American flag” unless the item was manufactured in the United States.

“If anything should be made in the United States, it should be the American flag,” said Rukavina. The bill was approved without opposition and now goes to the House floor.

[Rep. Tim Mahoney](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said he is opposed to any use of the flag other than at the top of a flagpole, but he did not offer an amendment.

[Rep. Erik Paulsen](#) (R-Eden Prairie) asked how those who sell such merchandise would be regulated. Rukavina said his intent with the bill is directed at stores and Internet sales, and said the cost of regulation would be minimal.

A companion bill, [SF62](#), sponsored by [Sen. David Tomassoni](#) (DFL-Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee.

CRIME

Early support for youth

The most important thing we can do to reduce juvenile crime is to support early intervention and prevention programs, said Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom.

He testified before the House Public Safety Finance Division Feb. 14 in support of [HF303](#), which would appropriate \$4 million in the next biennium to bolster youth intervention programs. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Michael Paymar](#) (DFL-St. Paul), said that with additional funds, 35 to 40 new programs could be established and existing activities expanded.

J. Scott Beatty, executive director of Youth Intervention Programs Association, said the best time to reach youth is when they are just starting to get into trouble. Restoring the funding would help make that possible. Since the budget was cut in 2003, 6,000 fewer youth have participated in the programs, Beatty said.

A companion bill, [SF277](#), sponsored by [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

EDUCATION

Short-term borrowing

Intermediate school districts could do short-term borrowing against future payments from the state and member school districts to avoid financial problems, if a bill becomes law.

Sponsored by [Rep. Lyndon Carlson](#) (DFL-Crystal), [HF329](#) was laid over Feb. 13 by the House K-12 Finance Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

"All of our revenue sources come from the districts that we serve for the students that we serve on their behalf. We don't receive direct levy aid from the taxpayers or from the Department of Education," said Connie Hayes, superintendent of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District in White Bear Lake.

Districts could borrow no more than 75 percent of the anticipated payments.

According to the bill, the education commissioner would certify the aid, fees and tuition payments in determining the maximum amount of borrowing capacity for the year.

"We have no ability to do any aid or revenue anticipation borrowing. The only way we can get

funding is to go back to member districts and ask them to advance funds, or we pre-bill in advance of tuition payments," said Kristine Carr, director of administrative services for District 916.

A companion bill, [SF422](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Alternative teacher pay system

An alternative teacher pay system, known as Q Comp, could be easier for three intermediate school districts to use.

The House E-12 Education Committee approved [HF365](#) Feb. 13, and referred it to the House K-12 Finance Division.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), the bill would modify the alternative teacher pay aid calculation for intermediate school districts.

The bill would change the aid calculation for intermediate school districts that do not have sufficient students to generate enough funds for Q Comp. Instead of using the current \$260 times the number of per pupil units, the state formula would be \$3,800 times the number of licensed educators teaching in the school. No fiscal note was provided.

"The goals with this bill are twofold: to increase the knowledge and skills of teachers that serve in the district, and to retain and attract teachers to the district," said Connie Hayes, superintendent of Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District in White Bear Lake. The bill also addresses districts in Rosemount and Plymouth.

The problem is that these districts provide services for special populations, but the funding isn't enough to offer the alternative compensation. "We have some of the most severely disabled and challenged handicapped students from our member school districts," Hayes said.

Intermediate school districts generally take students with communication and interaction disorders from 11 to 13 neighboring school districts. Students spend two to six hours a day attending career and industrial tech courses.

A companion bill, [SF354](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

School readiness advisory board

Early childhood education could be an efficient, cost-effective and coordinated program focusing on education, healthcare and family support. A bill, [HF169](#), would establish a 12-member advisory school readiness board that would advise the governor and the Legislature on developing the program.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), the bill was approved by the House E-12 Education Committee Feb. 13, and referred to the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division.

Legislative leaders would appoint eight of the members — five would be recognized experts in early care and education, and three would be community or business leaders. They would serve staggered three-year terms. The board would expire on Jan. 1, 2013.

The commissioners of employment and economic development, health, education and human services, or their designees, would be permanent members.

The bill originally had the governor appointing eight members.

"We felt having a governor appointing these members could politicize the picks; we want bipartisan support," Slawik said.

According to the bill, the duties of the board would be finding methods for measuring the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of early care and education programs throughout the state. Seeing ways to identify and measure school readiness indicators on a regular basis, and policy changes to improve children's ability to start school ready to learn.

Separate policy work groups would make recommendations on five additional topics, including financing early childhood programs

A companion bill, [SF92](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 19 by the Senate Education Committee.

Early childcare funding

Cuts to early education funding have created hardships for at least some centers that are trying to serve children and families living in hardship.

Mike Thorsteinson, executive director of Three Rivers Community Action Inc, which operates three centers in southeast Minnesota, said that approximately 70 families have lost service and Three Rivers has had to lay off 10 staff members due to \$228,000 in budget cuts to early education funding.

"This is just a picture of a one three-county agency in southern Minnesota," he said.

Two bills addressing the issue were brought before the House Early Childhood Learning Finance Division on Feb. 13. Both were laid over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

Sponsored respectively by [Rep. David Bly](#) (DFL-Northfield) and [Rep. Scott Kranz](#) (DFL-Blaine), both teachers, [HF5](#) and [HF139](#) would increase funding for Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness and Head Start programs.

The bills would raise the total statewide school readiness aid to nearly \$10.4 million for fiscal year 2008, up from \$9.02 million in fiscal year 2007. Early Childhood Family Education program funding would increase from \$112 to \$120 times the greater of 150 or the number of people under age 5 residing in the district on Oct. 1 of the previous school year; and the state appropriation to Head Start would go up from \$19.1 million to \$20.1 million for fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

Companion bills, [SF291](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tarryl Clark](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), and [SF126](#), sponsored by [Sen. Patricia Torres Ray](#) (DFL-Mpls), both await action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Safe school levies

School districts can access a safe school levy, formerly known as the crime levy, to help pay for student and staff safety-related issues, including police liaisons, gang resistance education training, school security and drug abuse prevention.

Under current law, a district can levy \$27 per pupil unit for the safety levy. The problem is that intermediate school districts can't access this levy, even though they are more likely to have incidents of violence, supporters say.

Sponsored by [Rep. Maria Ruud](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), [HF360](#) would allow the 32 metro school districts that are members of intermediate school districts to levy an additional \$10 per pupil unit for safe schools. If all levies would pass, it would provide nearly \$2.6 million in 2008.

The bill was heard on Feb. 13 by the K-12 Finance Division and laid over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill

Intermediate school districts provide services for special students with hearing, mental or physical impairments; learning disabilities; severe emotional behavioral or neurobiological disorders.

"The kinds of things we have seen this year are kids that bring weapons to school, and scissors are being used as weapons. Some are already sexual predators, one sixth-grade student brought in an 18-inch pellet gun to his home school and now he attends our school," said Sandra Lewandowski, superintendent of Intermediate District 287 in Plymouth.

A companion bill, [SF295](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Saltzman](#) (DFL-Woodbury), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Special education funding

Three bills that would change the special education funding formula have been held over for possible inclusion in the House

COLD DUCK



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Century College mascot Woody the Woodduck, aka Maureen Monson, a second-year law enforcement student, joined several hundred other Minnesota State Colleges and Universities students to rally in front of the Capitol Feb. 14 for lower tuition.

K-12 Finance Division omnibus bill. Each was heard by the division Feb. 8.

Sponsored by [Rep. Will Morgan](#) (DFL-Burnsville), [HF649](#) would remove the statewide cap on excess cost revenue and increase the reimbursement percentage from 75 percent to 90 percent. This bill would increase the excess cost aid by an estimated \$175 million in fiscal year 2008.

A companion bill, [SF702](#), sponsored by Sen. Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

The current funding formula for special education requires that a district must first spend 4.36 percent of its general fund revenue on special education services before qualifying for an aid amount that equals 75 percent of the district's remaining cost, reduced by the

statewide cap on excess cost expenditures.

The Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district spent \$21.1 million on special education in the 2005-06 biennium, but because its revenue was just \$13.6 million, the district had to borrow \$7.5 million from its general fund, said Superintendent Ben Kanninen. The state's excess cost aid for the district for those two years was \$1.9 million. With this bill, that aid would increase to \$4.9 million.

"There is a 6 or 7 percent increase in spending on special education costs each of the past three years, and we're receiving a 2 percent increase in the general fund," Kanninen said, noting other programs have been cut to help cover special education costs.

[Rep. Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn

Center) and [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud) also sponsor special education funding bills. Neither has a Senate companion.

Hilstrom's bill, [HF786](#) would reestablish program growth factors for special education at 5 percent per year and 10 percent for the excess cost special education formula.

Haws' bill, [HF778](#), would help school districts that have high special education costs by redefining the formula used in determining a district's extraordinary special education revenue.

ELECTIONS

Leaving campaign materials behind

Candidates with campaign workers would be permitted to enter and leave campaign materials in multi-unit residences, under a bill approved Feb. 14 by the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Sponsored by [Rep. Nora Slawik](#) (DFL-Maplewood), [HF340](#) would clarify that candidates are permitted to enter into buildings such as apartments, dormitories, nursing homes or manufactured home parks. Additionally, the bill permits candidates who have filed for public office and campaign workers to leave campaign materials. The workers must be with the candidate.

Slawik said the change comes from a situation in which [Sen. Sandy Pappas](#) (DFL-St. Paul) was unable to leave behind materials at a facility during the last campaign.

[Rep. Mike. Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said he, too, had a problem gaining access to an apartment building and had to go to the national headquarters to gain access. A maintenance worker was instructed to follow him through the complex and remove his campaign materials as he left them behind, he said.

[Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague) said permitting any campaign worker into a multi-unit building could raise concerns. She failed to amend language changing "must be permitted to leave campaign materials for residents," to "may" leave materials.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF226](#), sponsored by Pappas, was recommended to pass by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee Subcommittee on Elections Feb. 14.

No anonymous pamphlets, sort of

An attempt to curb anonymous campaign pamphlets can only go so far, under a bill approved Feb. 14 by the House Governmental

Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Under [HF403](#), sponsored by [Rep. Sandra Peterson](#) (DFL-New Hope), candidates would be required to have a disclaimer on campaign materials for four explicit purposes: to avoid the appearance of corruption in political campaigns; to promote justice and fair play in campaigns; to give voters information about the source of statements in campaign material so they may better judge its credibility; and to make it possible to hold accountable those who disseminate false campaign material.

Because the Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled in April 2006 that Minnesota's disclaimer laws were found to be overly broad and that regulating pure speech was thereby unconstitutional, new laws can't cover individuals or associations that act independently of any candidate, candidates' committees, political committees or political funds, said Peterson.

"This bill is the best efforts of our research staff to construct additional language in our state law," concerning disclaimers and the rulings of the court, Peterson said

"The money that is being spent in the campaigns is coming from these exact groups that are being excluded," said [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague). Brod unsuccessfully offered an amendment that would have removed two of the purposes for the disclaimer requirement.

Although agreeing with Brod that the bill doesn't go far enough, Peterson said supreme court cases in other states have ruled limiting certain groups to be unconstitutional; therefore, the bill addresses disclaimers for individual candidates' materials only.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

A companion bill, [SF458](#), sponsored by [Sen. Jim Carlson](#) (DFL-Eagan), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

Transferring HAVA funds

The [Office of the Secretary of State](#) would be able to reallocate Help America Vote Act appropriations, under a bill passed 106-25 by the House Feb. 13.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bill Hilty](#) (DFL-Finlayson), [HF160](#) would allow unused appropriations designated for specific HAVA purposes to be transferred to other HAVA purposes. Previous allocation amounts are defined in statute for detailed purposes.

For example, \$120,000 that was designated to process complaints received by the office that went unused could be transferred for the purpose of maintaining the statewide voter registration system and to develop the capacity to handle registration and election transactions at the polling place.

The \$1.1 million allocated for maintaining the system has been used entirely and implementing the bill would allow funds to be allocated for needed areas, Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the office, previously told a House committee. The funds are to be used by the end of June this year, she said.

An amendment unsuccessfully offered by [House Minority Leader Marty Seifert](#) (R-Marshall) would have distributed the remaining money evenly among townships to offset costs of HAVA requirements.

Hilty said the amendment was "a one-time solution to an ongoing problem." Additionally, townships have varying financial needs depending on size, he said.

An unsuccessful amendment offered by [Rep. Steve Sviggum](#) (R-Kenyon) would have allowed townships until 2019 to comply with HAVA requirements on the availability of disabled voter systems to be located at each polling place, which, he said, is an unfunded mandate.

The bill is scheduled to be heard Feb. 22 by the Senate Finance Committee. [Sen. Linda Higgins](#) (DFL-Mpls) is the Senate sponsor.

EMPLOYMENT

Working for the aging disabled

The House Health and Human Services Committee approved a bill Feb. 13 that would remove the age limit imposed by Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities, a program under medical assistance. It's been referred to the House Finance Committee.

The program, known as MA-EPD, allows disabled people to work while retaining their Medical Assistance benefits on a sliding fee scale. They are also exempt from marriage penalties. Under Medical Assistance, recipients are confined to \$3,000 in assets for single people and \$6,000 in assets for couples. Recipients, however, are limited to \$20,000 in assets and lose their eligibility at age 65.

"This simply allows people to work past 65, if that is their choice," said Joel Ulland, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

[HF706](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph), would also allow individuals 65 and older to abide by MA-EPD asset limits and continue to free them from marriage penalties. The bill has no Senate companion.

To find out who represents you
at the Capitol...
Call House Public Information Services at
(651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550

ENERGY

Fixing light pollution

Chances are that if you live in a major metropolitan area and look up at the night sky, you can't see the stars too well. [Rep. Phyllis Kahn](#) (DFL-Mpls) wants to change that.

Kahn sponsors [HF446](#), which would gradually modify most publicly funded outdoor lights by outfitting them with a hood called a "cutoff luminaire" that causes light to focus in a particular direction, much like a flashlight. In the case of most streetlights and highway lights, the light would be directed downward.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division approved the bill Feb. 14, with the understanding that it would return to the committee later in the session. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. It has no Senate companion.

"This is a bill that sets up some standards for the control of light pollution — which it turns out is also an energy conservation issue," Kahn said.

Tine Thevenin, a member of the International Dark-Sky Association, said the hoods cut down on the energy needed to light a particular area while also reducing glare, which she said makes it harder to see.

"Two billion dollars a year is wasted on energy lighting up in the sky. We don't need it in the sky; we need it on the ground," Thevenin said.

Members of both parties expressed concern that the bill would create an unfunded mandate for cities and counties to replace their current outdoor lights.

Kahn said the bill is a work in progress, and that she is willing to work on the issue further. She added that the restrictions would not apply to airports, outdoor sports stadiums and certain other special situations.

Turning waste into power

A facility that turns garbage into energy and powers itself: sounds too good to be true?

Japan already has several such facilities, and a bill sponsored by [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township) would let Koochiching County build one of its own.

[HF607](#) would appropriate \$400,000 for a feasibility study for a plasma torch gasification facility to be owned and operated by the county. Plasma torch gasification breaks down solid waste on a molecular level, converting it to marketable energy and substances that can be used in a variety of ways.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division approved the bill Feb. 14. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF477](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Energy, Utilities, Technology and Communications Committee.

"With our project ... at the end of the day, nothing goes to the landfill," said John Howard, chief technical officer for Coronal, the company slated to build the facility.

Howard explained that even though the Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million for the project in its omnibus capital investment bill last year, a bureaucratic holdup within the U.S. Department of Agriculture resulted in a feasibility study being required before the project could receive federal funds.

He added that the total price tag for the combined federal, state and local project is \$30 million.

GAMBLING

Fraternal organizations proceeds

Fraternal organizations would be able to use gambling proceeds to pay taxes on leased facilities and certain utilities, under a bill laid over Feb. 13 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

The issue came to [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), the sponsor of [HF271](#), from the Waite Park Moose Lodge. The organization serves and supports the community and needs some relief from financial burdens, said Gerald Janu, deputy area manager for the Minnesota State Moose Association.

Currently fraternal organizations, defined in the bill as a nonprofit organization which is a branch, lodge, or chapter of a national or state organization, cannot use gambling proceeds to pay for taxes and utilities like veterans groups can. The Moose have 27 lodges in the state and have lost three recently because they couldn't use gambling money to offset costs, Janu said.

A companion bill, [SF163](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Sparks](#) (DFL-Austin), awaits action in the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

GAME & FISH

Baiting bears

Bear hunters would have a new tool at their disposal, if a bill sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph) becomes law.

The Bear Baiter Buffet, a device invented and marketed by one of his constituents, is essentially a large metal box with six bait compartments, each with a time-released door. Hosch said the device allows hunters to bait bears without having to continually restock the bait.

[HF72](#) would allow the device to be used to trap bears in the state. The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division laid the bill over Feb. 12 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF88](#), sponsored by [Sen. Michelle Fischbach](#) (R-Paynesville), has been laid over by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Mike Lucken, inventor of the device, said the bill would clarify the state law on bear-baiting, which he said is ambiguous in regard to whether his invention could be legally used.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Tine Thevenin, a member of the International Dark-Sky Association, shows the difference in night light in Los Angeles in 1908 vs. 1988 during a Feb. 14 hearing of the House Energy Finance and Policy Division. The committee was hearing a bill that would restrict outdoor light pollution.

He added that the device is already used in several other states and Canada.

Ed Boggess, deputy director of the [Department of Natural Resources' Fish and Wildlife Division](#), said the DNR did not have an official position on the use of the device, but that the department had consulted with Lucken and had no immediate objections.

The bill's opponents include [Rep. Denny McNamara](#) (R-Hastings), who said the bill would "mechanize" bear hunting, and that people who could afford the \$800 device would hold an unfair advantage over other bear hunters.

Linda Hatfield, a private citizen, testified against the bill, arguing that the device's timed-release system would cause harm to bears by changing the times at which they eat, thereby altering their behavior.

Fishing discount for seniors

A bill sponsored by [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls) would slash the price of fishing licenses in half for senior citizens—but doing so might slash the Department of Natural Resources' fisheries budget as well.

[HF152](#) would lower the price of a fishing license from \$17 to \$8.50 for people age 70 or over. Originally, the bill would have applied to those age 65 or over, but Nornes amended the bill after a fiscal analysis showed it would cause a drop of anywhere from \$584,000 to \$730,000 in the department's annual fishing license revenue.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill as amended Feb. 13. It now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF282](#), sponsored by [Sen. Dan Skogen](#) (DFL-Hewitt), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Nornes said he is sponsoring the bill on behalf of senior citizens in his district who "still remember when the state had a free fishing license."

"As this session was getting started, again I was reminded, once more, that they wanted their free fishing license back. Well, I know we have to compromise in this place, so that's why I'm here suggesting a half-price fishing license," Nornes said.

Dave Thompson, a resort owner and former DNR Citizen Oversight Committee member, said that because of the state's aging population, decreasing license fees for senior citizens would have a "huge impact" on the department's budget. He added that the state had decreased its General Fund appropriation to the DNR in recent years.

[Rep. David Dill](#) (DFL-Crane Lake), division chairman, said increasing the bill's age requirement from 65 to 70 would likely "lessen

the impact" financially on the department.

Nornes added that decreasing license fees might encourage more seniors to buy licenses, and argued the state should consider increasing its General Fund appropriation to the DNR.

Timber harvesting

According to [Rep. Tom Anzelc](#) (DFL-Balsam Township), sometimes timber that should be harvested isn't—and that can have a serious impact on local economies in rural Minnesota.

Anzelc sponsors [HF354](#), a bill he hopes will draw some attention to the issue. It would require the [Department of Natural Resources](#) to prepare a "local economic impact statement" whenever forestland under the department's authority is withdrawn from timber harvesting.

The House Game, Fish and Forestry Division approved the bill Feb. 12; it now goes to the House Finance Committee. A companion bill, [SF91](#), sponsored by [Sen. Tom Saxhaug](#) (DFL-Grand Rapids), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 21 by a subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

"What we find is that from time to time, timber sales on state land are delayed, and are many times pulled from the list," Anzelc said, adding that such cancelled timber sales often have a great impact on counties and schools, which depend on tax revenues from timber sales.

Wayne Brandt, executive vice-president of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association, said the economic impact statements required by the bill would provide a "reasonable set of information" for legislators and other officials to use when making decisions.

DNR Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier said the department had concerns about the "breadth of the land" covered by the bill and the potential cost of producing the reports, but added the DNR would be willing to work with Anzelc to improve the bill's language.

[Rep. Jean Wagenius](#) (DFL-Mpls) said the bill focuses too much on economic impacts and not enough on environmental impacts.

"There is no consideration of conservation or ecological balance here, so the commissioner can only look at one thing," Wagenius said.

Anzelc responded that the bill was a "work in progress," and that he would be willing to consider environmental impacts as well.

Replacing road signs

Some road signs designed to provide safety for travelers are in need of repair or replacement.

Sponsored by [Rep. Bernard Lieder](#) (DFL-Crookston), [HF562](#) would appropriate \$2 million to the town road sign replacement program.

"This would provide some match for some federal monies that are coming down," Lieder said. "It's one of those situations where if you don't take advantage of the money, it's not going to be available here and it'll go somewhere else."

Approved Feb. 13 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

Reestablished by the 2005 Legislature, the program, in part, includes inventorying county and town road signs, evaluating their condition, potentially replacing signs and establishing an ongoing maintenance program. Because of better materials, newer signs have a longer life expectancy.

However, the program is not effective until there is an appropriation from state or federal funds.

Dave Fricke, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Townships, said that a federal bill provided \$3 million for the program. Typical federal practice requires the use of some local funds; therefore, approximately 80 percent of this amount would be federal dollars appropriated over four years. The remaining \$1.4 million of the request would be used to entice more federal dollars.

A similar program in 1989 and 1990 addressed about 150,000 signs across the state on rural and township roads. "We have almost 59,000 miles of road, and, we too, are real keen on having safety. ... A key to that are these hazard signs," Fricke said.

To do the whole state it would cost about \$25 million to \$30 million over a number of years, Fricke said.

"We need funding bad for this," said [Rep. Doug Magnus](#) (R-Slayton), who sponsored a [similar bill](#) last biennium.

A companion bill, [SF360](#), sponsored by [Sen. Steve Murphy](#) (DFL-Red Wing), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

If you have Internet access, visit the
Legislature's Web page at:
www.leg.mn

Listening to the need

According to parent advocates, the struggles of raising a hard-of-hearing or a deaf child aren't limited to simply fulfilling special health care needs.

"Parents are often in shock about their child's hearing loss, feeling overwhelmed by conflicting professional advice about choices and feeling isolated, especially in Greater Minnesota," said Lifetrack Resources Coordinator Candace Lindow-Davies, whose 11-year-old son is deaf.

[HF462](#), sponsored by [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), attempts to assuage this distress.

The bill, held over by the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division Feb. 14 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill, proposes \$200,000 for the 2008-2009 biennium for Lifetrack Resources to finance parent guides and other support services outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Lifetrack Resources serves approximately 1,300 people annually, either directly or over the Internet. The organization receives most of its funding through the Greater Twin Cities United Way, though it has been contracted by the [Department of Health](#) to provide parent-to-parent support across the state until 2008.

Funding is tenuous, said Lindow-Davies, and monies requested would pay for salaries for parent staff, as well as services such as educational workshops, Web site maintenance and informational materials.

A companion bill, [SF384](#), sponsored by [Sen. Kathy Sheran](#) (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Granting the disabled more money

According to advocates, the disabled endure struggles beyond their physical or mental ailments. To receive medical assistance, for example, recipients must "spend-down," or pay monthly medical costs until their income approaches poverty. They must also liquidate assets that exceed eligibility guidelines.

Sponsored by [Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul), [HF784](#) attempts to change that. The bill, approved by the House Health and Human Services Committee Feb. 13, would increase both the asset limit and the excess income standard, or spend-down, for aged, blind and disabled persons. It now goes to the House Finance Committee.

Currently, disabled people must earn less than 75 percent of federal poverty



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

The Rev. Craig Johnson displays a photograph of his daughter, Laura, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, during Feb. 13 testimony on disabilities before the House Health and Human Services Committee.

guidelines, or about \$7,500 a year, to receive medical assistance in Minnesota. Those earning more are required to cover medical expenses each month until their income meets assistance standards. The bill would increase the allowable income over four years — by 10 percentage points the first year and 5 percentage points each year following — to 100 percent of poverty guidelines.

In addition, the bill would double the asset limit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 for single-person households, and \$6,000 to \$12,000 for two-person households. Assets do not include homes or household goods, some business costs, motor vehicles or burial expenses. The boost, however, may allow some to cover unanticipated costs.

"The \$3,000 doesn't offer you a lot of flexibility for those unexpected expenses that we all have," said Joel Ulland, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"The amount of money these folks have left after they're through with their month's expenses gives a whole new idea to the word poverty," [Rep. Jim Abeler](#) (R-Anoka) said.

A companion bill, [SF695](#), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee. Its sponsor is [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona).

Have a heart

[Rep. Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) spent part of her Valentine's Day promoting a bill designed for matters of the heart.

"I think on this day ... it's appropriate to

talk about the metaphoric place of feelings and the heart, and also talk about legislation that protects the heart," she said.

[HF678](#) would appropriate \$400,000 in one-time funding to the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Unit in the [Department of Health](#), which seeks to implement plans aimed at curbing Minnesota's No. 1 killer — cardiovascular disease.

Members of the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division held the bill over for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion bill, [SF509](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ann Lynch](#) (DFL-Rochester), is scheduled to be heard Feb. 20 by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.

The Centers for Disease Control originally funded the unit with dollars designated for planning. According to Dr. Russell Luepker, a member of the group's steering committee, the CDC has discouraged all proposals this year due to limited resources.

The bill would fund data collection and other activities, including developing infrastructure, detection and treatment capacity, promoting awareness and eliminating disparities. Luepker estimated the cost of implementation at \$1.2 million.

Preventing suicide

Al Kluesner and his wife, Mary, endured the unimaginable not once, but twice: two of their children, Michael and Amy, committed suicide.

Since the death of his daughter in 1985,

Kluesner has spearheaded organizations and legislation aimed at preventing his family's tragedy. On Valentine's Day, he urged the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, to approve [HF315](#), which would re-appropriate \$1.1 million a year for suicide prevention grants. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The decisions about this funding are life and death decisions, said Rachel Schott, whose brother killed himself while a sophomore at Mankato West High School. "As our funding was chiseled away, so has our suicide rate begun to climb in this state." No funding has been provided since 2005.

In Minnesota, 542 people committed suicide in 2006, the most in state history according to the [Department of Health](#). In 2003, the department reported that suicide was the second leading cause of death among 15- to 34-year-olds.

The bill, sponsored by [Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba](#) (DFL-Long Prairie), would provide funding at the rate allocated in 2001. The money would finance community-based efforts through a grant process; in 2004, 13 projects were funded.

"We have the strategy, we have the plan, we have the evidence-based programs to prevent suicide," Schott said. "We just need the funding."

A companion bill, [SF214](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

HOUSING

Meeting a desperate need

Amanda Danielson became homeless at the age of 15 because her home life wasn't safe, she said. To survive, she joined a group of 15 other homeless youth; they slept under bridges and in abandoned houses and dumpsters, which they sometimes ate out of, too.

On Feb. 13, Danielson, now a peer outreach worker for the young and homeless, testified before the House Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division on behalf of [HF537](#), which would appropriate \$8 million in the next biennium to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill.

The bill, which has no Senate companion, focuses on three aspects of homeless services, known as the continuum of care: outreach, emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing. The funding would be distributed through a grant process for homeless

youth providers, and "shall be directed to meet the greatest need, with a significant share of the funding focused ... in Greater Minnesota." Up to 5 percent of funding would be designated for administration costs, and up to 8 percent for program monitoring and evaluation.

The bill's sponsor, [Rep. Karen Clark](#) (DFL-Mpls), estimated that \$8 million would meet about one-fourth the total need, or help about 10,000 young people, during the next biennium.

Clark sponsored the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act in Minnesota last year, which mirrors federal legislation passed in the 1970s. It was to provide money towards continuum of care services for homeless youth and established a pilot project for after-school programs; however, the act was not funded.

HUMANITIES

Ethnic heritage

With 80 percent of the human brain developing before age 3, children should be introduced to languages as soon as possible, even before birth.

This is what Odell Bjerkness, retired director of the language villages at Concordia College in Moorhead, told the House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division Feb. 12.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF318](#) would establish a 20-member Commission on Minnesota Ethnic Heritage, including four legislators and 16 citizen members.

Jaros said he couldn't speak English when he came to Minnesota from Bosnia. He said his mother told him how to say, "I don't speak English," in German, which didn't help too much and resulted in him almost getting beat up his first day of school.

The commission, which would meet twice between July 2007 and June 30, 2008, would work to foster understanding between ethnic groups and promote cultural diversity within Minnesota. The estimated cost for the commission is \$38,000 and would come from the state's General Fund.

The bill was held over by the division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. There is no Senate companion.

Indian affairs

An Indian burial ground with about 16 bodies was found in Becker County near Detroit Lakes about two years ago.

The House Minnesota Heritage Finance Division heard a bill Feb. 12 on the significance of this land.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kent Eken](#) (DFL-Twin Valley), [HF583](#) would appropriate \$80,000 in fiscal year 2008 so the Indian Affairs Council could buy the burial site. The appropriation would be available until June 30, 2009.

Jim Jones, cultural director for the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, said the remains were found when a contractor was digging a trench for a house near Little Floyd Lake.

"This has turned into a unique opportunity to put back the remains where they came from," he said.

Many times when remains are found, they cannot be buried in the original location and are re-buried somewhere else, Jones said. Requests for relocation of the remains must be approved by the Indian Affairs Council. Under current law, Jones said efforts must be made by the state to buy burial sites.

This burial site is also unique because it is between 4,000 and 5,000 years old and pre-dates the Ojibwe people. Jones said nothing on the ground's surface indicated it was a burial site, like burial mounds found in other parts of the state. The goal is to return the remains where they were unearthed, he said.

The site is in the middle of a housing development on a hill. Jones said an archeological study was conducted before the development broke ground, but nothing was found at that time.

The bill was held over by the division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

A companion bill, [SF622](#), sponsored by [Sen. Rod Skoe](#) (DFL-Clearbrook), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

MILITARY

Contract cancellations

An estimated 2,600 Minnesota soldiers recently found out that their Iraq stay is being extended by up to 125 days.

This will cause conflicts for some that had big plans upon their previously scheduled return. For example, some who were planning to get married had a down payment on a reception hall. Now they'll need to get out of a rental agreement.

"Most of the providers and people who operate these venues are being good Minnesotans and letting the families exit from those types of contracts," said Col. Eric Ahlness, government relations officer for the [Minnesota National Guard](#).

Sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Winkler](#) (DFL-Golden Valley), [HF532](#) would further help soldiers and their families to get out of other contracts.

The bill was approved Feb. 9 by the House

Labor and Consumer Protection Division, and referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

It now awaits action by the House Energy Finance and Policy Division.

“This bill would supplement the federal [Servicemembers Civil Relief Act](#), which provides relief from rent, mortgage interest rates, credit card interest rates and other costs that service members incur when they are called to active duty, and it gives them the ability to find a way to more conveniently pay some of those costs,” Winkler said. It would also apply to any business owned by the service member and his or her spouse.

Protection would be offered in areas that likely affect younger soldiers, such as being able to cancel a cell phone, satellite television, Internet service or health club membership contract without penalty. It also prohibits utilities from disconnecting service if a member of the household has been ordered into active duty.

“The essential purpose behind this legislation is that when soldiers and sailors are called by their country to risk their lives overseas or in distant parts of the globe, they are not also asked to pay for a cell phone contract they cannot use, pay for a wireless Internet that they can’t access or cable television that they can’t watch,” Winkler said.

A companion bill, [SF409](#), sponsored by [Sen. Sharon Erickson Ropes](#) (DFL-Winona), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

Honoring veterans

When a member of the active-duty military dies, the government provides an Honor Guard for the funeral. But when a veteran from an earlier action dies, the Honor Guard is usually made up of volunteers from the local veterans service organization, with little or no reimbursement.

“We have an obligation to provide military funerals to all veterans,” Capt. John Marshall, commander of the Duluth Combined Honor Guard, told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9. His unit participated at more than 200 funerals last year. But for various reasons, the pool of Honor Guard volunteers is dwindling, as the number of funerals for veterans of earlier wars — especially World War II — is on the rise.

Sponsored by [Rep. Mike Jaros](#) (DFL-Duluth), [HF451](#) would help ensure that all veterans receive military honors. The bill was approved and referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Duluth Combined Honor Guard members Robert Woods, left, and Capt. John Marshall, right, testify before the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9 in support of a bill that would provide Honor Guard member reimbursement for National Guard funerals.

Provisions call for: activation of National Guard members, at their normal pay rate, for the funeral of any Guard member who dies while serving actively in the military or after having served honorably for six or more years in the Guard; and paying up to \$50 to a Congressionally chartered local veterans service organization for each time it provides an Honor Guard detail for a veteran’s funeral.

Robert Woods, also a member of the Duluth unit, said that a 1999 federal law states that all veterans are entitled to military honors — two military personnel to fold and present the flag to the survivors. However, because of the nation’s military commitments, the forces are not available and the responsibility falls on the volunteers.

Woods said his hope is for the committee to approve the bill and forward it on so, “that we can help bury our fellow veterans with dignity.”

The issue hit an emotional chord with [Rep. Sandy Wollschlager](#) (DFL-Cannon Falls). Tearfully she said, “I’m actually ashamed that we haven’t given you more. I personally don’t think that \$50 is enough.”

A companion bill, [SF487](#), sponsored by [Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon](#) (DFL-Duluth), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

Tuition waiver for spouses

A spouse of a deceased service member could have all tuition and fees waived if they seek an undergraduate degree at any Minnesota post secondary public institution.

Sponsored by [Rep. Larry Haws](#) (DFL-St. Cloud), [HF279](#) would extend benefits to spouses that are already available to children of any Minnesota service member who has died as a direct result of their military service. Known as the “War Orphans Act of 1943,” an annual \$750 stipend is also available to help pay for expenses related to pursuing the higher education degree.

Haws told the House Veterans Affairs Division Feb. 9 that the measure also changes the survivor’s state residency requirement. Beneficiaries would no longer need to be state residents; rather, the residency requirement would rely on whether the deceased was a resident of the state at the time of the enlistment or reenlistment into the military.

The bill was approved and referred to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee.

“The battle for the spouse remaining stateside begins when the spouse is deployed, but it continues when the news is delivered that they are not going to be coming home,” said Brian Jensen, a National Guard member and St. Louis Park police officer.

Steve Frantz, director of disabilities and student life for the Minnesota State College and Universities system, said that during fiscal year 2006, 20 to 25 students took advantage of the waiver at a cost to MnSCU of about \$80,000. He expects that financial commitment to increase another \$40,000 annually if spouses are included under the benefit. “We think this is a small amount of money to absorb,” he said. The stipend is funded through the State Soldier Assistance Program.

A companion bill, [SF375](#), sponsored by [Sen. Gary Kubly](#) (DFL-Granite Falls), awaits action by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee.

TAXES

Local government exemption

Local governments could receive sales tax exemptions if a bill heard by the House Taxes Committee Feb. 13 becomes law.

The bill will be considered for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Sponsored by [Rep. Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover), [HF174](#) would exempt local units of government from sales and use tax. Only building materials and motor vehicles would be taxed. But there are exceptions to those as well. For example, building materials for local correctional facilities would be exempt.

Under current law, sales to school districts, local government hospitals and nursing homes, and public libraries are exempt from sales and use taxes. Other exemptions include purchases necessary for public safety, like fire trucks, police cars and ambulances.

If passed, the state would lose an estimated \$125.8 million from its General Fund in fiscal year 2008 and as much as \$150.5 million by fiscal year 2011.

A companion bill, [SF194](#), sponsored by [Sen. Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

Tax reform commission

A tax reform commission could be created to look at the state's tax system.

Sponsored by [Rep. Laura Brod](#) (R-New Prague), [HF251](#) would establish a 15-member commission to study the state tax revenue system and make recommendations to the Legislature for revenue neutral changes, including a draft bill implementing its recommendations by July 2009. Appointees would include private citizens and legislative members.

Heard Feb. 14 by the House Taxes Committee, the bill was held over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill. It has no Senate companion.

[Rep. Tom Rukavina](#) (DFL-Virginia) didn't like the meaning of a "private" citizen when the private citizens would be of "recognized standing and distinction and who possess demonstrated capacity to discharge the duties ... who have special experience or knowledge in taxation, economics and accounting."

"I want to see real people on this committee," Rukavina said.

He added that a man with epilepsy called him the other day saying he had to choose between

eating and buying his prescriptions.

"Is he gonna be on this commission? He could teach people on the committee a lot," Rukavina said. "It's our duty to make money and spend it. And we haven't been doing a very good job of it lately."

Brod said she would be "more than happy" to work on the commission membership and would welcome suggestions from other representatives. But, she said her intent is to strike a balance between legislative and private commission members.

"We all learn a lot from all of our constituents," she said. "That obviously has to be in play as we look at our entire tax structure."

Exempt capital purchases

Three bills were introduced to the House Taxes Committee Feb. 13 that would provide sales tax exemptions on capital equipment purchases for businesses.

All were held over for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill.

Reps. [Sondra Erickson](#) (R-Princeton), [Chris DeLaForest](#) (R-Andover) and [Debra Hilstrom](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) are sponsoring [HF186](#), [HF193](#) and [HF206](#), identical bills that would help the state's manufacturing industry by repealing the refund requirement for capital equipment, making the sales tax exemption available at the time of purchase or lease.

Currently, businesses purchasing qualifying capital equipment must pay the sales tax when they buy the equipment and then apply for a refund. A business may file no more than two claims per year, but the claims can be for multiple transactions and there is no dollar limit.

Joe Glenn, president of Glenn Metalcraft in Princeton, said he paid \$90,000 in sales tax on Feb. 5 for equipment he needed to help differentiate his company from others in the industry.

David Owen, president of DHY Corporation, a precision machining company in Lakeville, said global competition is making it difficult for manufacturing businesses in the United States.

"We are literally fighting for our lives," he said. "It feels a little like being a dying patient and having blood taken from you, and it just sits on a shelf somewhere. Then they come and give it back to you when you're even sicker. It seems pointless and it's discouraging."

A trio of companion bills, [SF159](#), [SF234](#) and [SF117](#), sponsored by Sens. [Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), [Chris Gerlach](#) (R-Apple Valley) and [Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), await action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

TRANSPORTATION

Traffic ticket fee

It's about money. It's about behavior. It's about money. It's about behavior.

This was the back-and-forth discussion at the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee Feb. 12 focusing on whether local governments should have the right to assess administrative fees onto traffic citations.

[HF656](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tony Cornish](#) (R-Good Thunder) would prohibit fees, while [HF847](#), sponsored by [Rep. Larry Hosch](#) (DFL-St. Joseph), would allow local authorities to levy fees at their discretion.

Cornish said adding administrative fees onto traffic tickets is nothing more than an effort to get more money for local governments. Local police officers have been told that if they write a ticket, any additional fees assessed on top of a state violation will go to the local government's pocket, said Cornish. With so many smaller communities losing local government aid, some see this as a way to recoup some of their losses.

Not only would this practice go against recent findings by the Minnesota Attorney General's office, Cornish said, there would be no uniformity in the way local authorities write citations.

The bill was laid over for further consideration. Its companion bill, [SF155](#), sponsored by [Sen. Leo Foley](#) (DFL-Coon Rapids), awaits action by the Senate Transportation Committee.

However, Hosch's bill, which has no Senate companion, was approved and referred to the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

Hosch said that when allowed to impose smaller fines for minor violations, as is the practice with some small municipalities, there is a marked decrease in traffic violations.

In support of Hosch's bill, Winona Chief of Police Frank Pomeroy said when the city began to assess administrative fees, drivers began to slow down, and the number of annual accidents fell from 1,200 to 800.

Restricted driver's license appearance

Joey Jordan didn't get to graduate from high school, get married or raise a family.

The 16-year-old was killed instantly when he was hit head-on by a drunken driver 19 months ago. Behind the wheel of the other vehicle was a 25-year-old with three prior convictions for driving under the influence.

"This is a hell I hope none of you ever have to go through," Kathy Jordan, Joey's mother, told the House Transportation and Transit

Policy Subcommittee Feb. 14.

A bill they strongly support would make it less likely.

Sponsored by [Rep. John Ward](#) (DFL-Brainerd), [HF676](#) would change the appearance of a restricted driver's license that disallows consumption of alcohol to the same color as that of a driver under the age of 21, and that there be a symbol or letter on the front of the license indicating it is a so-called "B-Card."

"We want to make it more visible to prevent future tragedies," Ward said.

Approved by the subcommittee, the bill, which has no Senate companion, next goes to the House Transportation Finance Division.

Under current law, the [Department of Public Safety](#) can issue a license to certain drivers if the applicant signs a written agreement to certain restrictions, such as no alcohol use.

The problem with the current license is that the restriction is placed on the back of the license in small print.

Marc Jordan, Joey's dad, used to operate three bars. He wasn't aware of the restriction's location until he asked to see the license of a co-worker that had been arrested for a DWI. "Nobody looks at the back of the card," he said.

"This way the bartender can more easily spot the provision," Kathy added.

[Rep. Shelley Madore](#) (DFL-Apple Valley) and [Rep. Mike Nelson](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) both said the bill would help, but noted the onus is on servers to check everyone's identification.

"Restaurants should have to card everyone," Nelson said. "We need to add that."

Rail feasibility study

An updated mode of transportation may one day come close to duplicating a time when streetcars ran between Lake Minnetonka and Minneapolis.

Sponsored by [Rep. Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park), [HF246](#) would provide \$500,000 for the Metropolitan Council to work with the [Center for Transportation Studies](#) at the University of Minnesota and the university's [Center for Changing Landscapes](#) to study the use of light or corridor rail from downtown Minneapolis to Ridgedale Drive, with the possibility of extending the line to Wayzata.

A report would be due to the Legislature by Dec. 15, 2007.

Approved Feb. 13 by the House Transportation Finance Division, the bill next goes to the House Finance Committee.

"There is an existing (Burlington Northern

Santa Fe) rail line just two miles south of Interstate 394," Hortman said, indicating the study would be directed to that stretch of track.

Brady Priest lives in Plymouth and works as an attorney in downtown Minneapolis. His 12-mile commute generally takes 25-30 minutes, even though he pays to use the so-called "Sane Lane" on a regular basis. However, winter weather or a traffic incident can easily extend his commute to more than an hour.

"I believe a rail line connecting the western suburbs to the Twin Cities will be a great improvement to the quality of life for those who, like me, head downtown every day on what's become an ever more congested 394," he said.

Hortman said the study would also look at integrating the corridor with other planned projects, such as the Southwest Rail Transit Corridor.

A companion bill, [SF189](#), sponsored by [Sen. Terri Bonoff](#) (DFL-Minnetonka), was scheduled to be heard Feb. 15 by the Transit Subdivision of the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division.

Slow it down

The speed limit on roads within urban districts or on a town road in a rural residential district is 30 mph, but the limit can jump to 55 mph in other areas. For some, that's way too fast.

Sponsored by [Rep. Kathy Tingelstad](#)

(R-Andover), [HF661](#) would add "or city street" to the 30 mph zone.

It was held over Feb. 12 by the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee for further discussion.

Andover Mayor Michael Nash spoke about an incident where a car going the speed limit in a residential area tried to make a turn, lost control, hit a house and exposed a gas line. There was an explosion and the house was destroyed. Nash said many Andover residents, called him asking, "Why is the limit 55? Can't you change it?"

Andover City Engineer David Berkowitz, who said he spends a lot of time answering residents' questions about the speed limit, said there are areas within the community that are not designed for high motor vehicle speeds. The city has put up warning signs throughout but people are not slowing down.

The city petitioned the [Department of Transportation](#) to lower the speed limit to 30 mph, but the department determined the limit should stay at 55 mph, Berkowitz said.

Bernard Arseneau, state traffic engineer with the department, said the department wants to maintain manageable statutory speeds throughout the state, while keeping the flexibility to work with areas like Andover. Further research is being done and the department will propose a solution to Andover within a year, he said.

A companion bill, [SF747](#), sponsored by [Sen. Betsy Wergin](#) (R-Princeton), has been sent to the Senate Transportation Committee.

SUPERMILEAGE DEMO



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Eden Prairie High School seniors Eddy Stilson, *bottom*, and Jared Hylander look at one of the components of the school's supermileage vehicle that was on display Feb. 13 in the Rotunda as part of Career and Technical Education Week. Students participating in the Minnesota Technology Education Association design and build one-person vehicles to achieve maximum mileage efficiency. Last year's Eden Prairie vehicle achieved 230 mpg. This year's competition will be May 15-16 in Brainerd.

No stranger to the Capitol

Berns looks to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor

By Nick Busse

In an article in the [May 12, 2006](#), issue of Session Weekly, retiring Rep. Barb Sykora (R-Excelsior) left a piece of advice for her successor: “Have an open door. Be willing to listen to all sides.”



Rep. John Berns

Her successor turned out to be [Rep. John Berns](#) (R-Wayzata), who read that advice and took it to heart.

“In Barb’s tradition, because she was a great legislator, I will always listen and be there for my constituents,” Berns said.

No stranger to the Capitol, Berns works as Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s No. 2 lawyer. He is also a volunteer firefighter, a former prosecutor, former city council member, former conservation district board member,

and — last but not least — a proud dad. He and his wife have three children, the youngest of which was born right before last year’s election.

But Berns, who grew up in a small Iowa farm town “in the middle of nowhere,” is especially excited about his newest challenge.

“I’m very honored to be here. Probably like most people who are elected, you never imagine growing up as a kid that you’ll have the opportunity to serve in the Minnesota House of Representatives,” he said.

As a legislator, Berns’ priorities include several common themes like education, property taxes and health care, as well as one that’s not so common.

“If you look at the map, my district’s got a big blue spot in the middle of it, which is Lake Minnetonka,” Berns said, adding that 10 of the 11 cities in his district touch the lake. He said he’d like to see the state focus more

DISTRICT 33B

2002 population: 39,943

Largest city: Minnetonka

County: Hennepin

Top concerns: Education, property taxes, health care and invasive aquatic species

on controlling the spread of invasive aquatic species.

“I really want to make sure the state does everything it can to prevent zebra mussels from invading,” Berns said. “At the same time, the state needs to do more research to eradicate milfoil. Those are really big issues in my district.”

As for being a Republican in a DFL-controlled Legislature, Berns said he’s optimistic.

“We have so much in common, both as people and as public servants who want to get things done, and that really makes me feel good.”

Keeping himself accessible

Gardner’s blog helps him connect with constituents

By Lee Ann Schutzy

Besides being a new member of the House, [Rep. Paul Gardner](#) (DFL-Shoreview) claims new membership to the Minnesota chapter of the General Society of the War of 1812, a group of descendants from the historic war.



Rep. Paul Gardner

Gardner’s avid interest in genealogy, and his 15-year search of his family’s lineage, led to documentation that his great-great-grandfather played a significant role in the war.

But tracing his family roots is not the only area where he has a strong interest — just bring up the topic of recycling.

Gardner stepped down as executive director of the Recycling Association of Minnesota after his election. Between his family of four’s

composting and recycling efforts, they don’t generate enough garbage to fill a 30-gallon container weekly.

An avid recycler since his college days, he recognizes how the state can benefit economically from recycling efforts. “We actually need more recyclables. Countries, like China, are buying up scrap metal, aluminum and plastic. And this has driven up the price, making the business of recyclables attractive,” he said.

Gardner earned his House seat by the slimmest margin of any member. His 55-vote lead triggered an automatic recount, where four of those votes went to his opponent.

Throughout the campaign, he focused on five issues: education, affordable health care, transportation, environment and rising property taxes.

“Transportation is very important to my constituents. I-694 is a bottleneck between 35E and 35W. That hasn’t been on the

DISTRICT 53A

2002 population: 36,629

Largest city: Shoreview

Counties: Anoka and Ramsey

Top concerns: Transportation, education, health care, environment and property taxes

(construction) calendar because of funding issues. I think you will see a big suburban push for transportation funding,” he said.

To make government more transparent and accessible to his constituents, Gardner has established his own weekly blog at [www.paulgardner53a.blogspot.com](#). “It’s not commentary, but it’s a chance for people to see who is coming to the office. I really want constituents to speak up,” he said.

Gardner also serves on the House Energy Finance and Policy and Environment and Natural Resources Finance divisions; House Environment and Natural Resources Committee; and is vice chairman of the Minnesota Heritage Finance Division.

Monday, February 12

HF802-Doty (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

War Orphans Act surviving military spouses and children; educational benefits eligibility clarified and extended.

HF803-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education

SMART Board pilot program funding provided in school districts throughout the state.

HF804-Atkins (DFL)

E-12 Education

International Baccalaureate, Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement programs participation increased.

HF805-Ruud (DFL)

Finance

Inflationary adjustment limitation removed relating to school district referendum allowance limit.

HF806-Faust (DFL)

Finance

Career and technical revenue increased for school districts.

HF807-Ruud (DFL)

Finance

Equity revenue increased for school districts above the 95th percentile.

HF808-Tillberry (DFL)

E-12 Education

Licensed student services personnel aid provided.

HF809-Dominguez (DFL)

Finance

Basic education aid increased.

HF810-Swails (DFL)

E-12 Education

Gifted and talented licensure and continuing education requirements established for teachers and other staff and administrators.

HF811-Wardlow (R)

E-12 Education

Mathematics and science professional development programs provided.

HF812-Seifert (R)

E-12 Education

School day minimum length established.

HF813-Eastlund (R)

E-12 Education

School board special election petition requirements clarified.

HF814-Bly (DFL)

E-12 Education

Teacher education and compensation helps (TEACH) program established.

HF815-Demmer (R)

Finance

Voluntary all-day kindergarten funding provided.

HF816-McNamara (R)

Finance

Prairie and wetland restoration planning and resource inventory funding provided relating to University of Minnesota land in Dakota County.

HF817-Benson (DFL)

Finance

Declining enrollment funding increased.

HF818-Hortman (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Towing authority granted to Department of Transportation within metropolitan district, and hazardous materials and motor vehicle carrier provisions modified.

HF819-Doty (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

State lottery games required for the benefit of the arts, historic preservation and conservation; and arts fund and historic preservation fund created.

HF820-Rukavina (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

University of Minnesota; Regent Candidate Advisory Council and regent nomination and election provisions repealed.

HF821-Smith (R)

Public Safety & Civil Justice

Property offense monetary thresholds adjusted.

HF822-Clark (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

Neighborhood revitalization program expiration date extended.

HF823-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Willmar airport runway extension funding provided.

HF824-Juhnke (DFL)

Finance

Willmar airport relocation repayment waived, future fund reductions prohibited and runway extension and improvements required.

HF825-Morrow (DFL)

Transportation Finance Division

Recreational vehicle combinations length limit for middle vehicle removed.

HF826-Mariani (DFL)

Higher Education & Work Force Development Policy & Finance Division

Motor vehicle manufacturing plant and facilities required to be maintained for a period of time after closure.

HF827-Knuth (DFL)

Finance

Greenhouse motor vehicle emissions reduction initiative enacted, and statewide transportation plan modified to reflect environmental impacts.

HF828-Kahn (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

A resolution urging the president and Congress to end trade, financial and travel restrictions to Cuba.

HF829-Paymar (DFL)

Finance

Public safety, corrections, courts, public defenders and other criminal justice funding provided and fees modified.

HF830-Nornes (R)

Taxes

Job opportunity building zone tax benefits extended.

HF831-Sailer (DFL)

Finance

Independent School District No. 2311, Clearbrook-Gonvick, authorized to use health and safety revenue to demolish a building.

HF832-Buesgens (R)

E-12 Education

General education access grants for students authorized.

HF833-Brown (DFL)

Finance

Special education additional aid provided, and program growth factors increased in regular and excess cost special education revenue.

HF834-Scalze (DFL)

Finance

Metropolitan Regional Parks System funding provided.

HF835-Demmer (R)

E-12 Education

Alternative school calendar pilot program established to examine the impact of school calendar arrangements on student learning.

HF836-Kalin (DFL)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid program state aid increased.

HF837-Lanning (R)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid increased and equalizing factors indexed.

HF838-Erickson (R)

Finance

Independent School District No. 480, Onamia, levy authorized.

HF839-Welti (DFL)

Finance

Debt service equalization aid program state aid increased.

HF840-Greiling (DFL)

Finance

Early childhood and family, pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and adult education funding provided.

HF841-Benson (DFL)

Finance

Program growth factors re-established, and special education programs funding increased.

HF842-Huntley (DFL)

Finance

Child care, children and family, licensing, health care, continuing care, mental health, health insurance and Department of Health provisions modified.

HF843-Benson (DFL)

Taxes

Electronic filing of individual income tax returns provided.

HF844-Tschumper (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

University of Minnesota organic research and education initiative funding provided.

HF845-Bly (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Alternative livestock research and outreach funding provided to the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Minnesota.

HF846-Doty (DFL)

Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs

Organic certification cost-share assistance and sustainable agriculture demonstration grants funding provided.

HF847-Hosch (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Counties and cities authorized to impose administrative penalties for certain traffic violations.

HF848-Marquart (DFL)**Taxes**

Agricultural homestead distance limitation eliminated, agricultural market value homestead credit increased and agricultural homestead class rate reduced.

HF849-Moe (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Shoreland resorts development regulation provided.

HF850-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Youthbuild program funding provided.

HF851-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Jobs and economic development funding provided, mortgage licensing requirements modified, construction codes and licensing recodified and modified, State Building Code modified and penalties provided.

HF852-Johnson (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

State fairgrounds area liquor license authorized.

HF853-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Timber sales provided on tax-forfeited lands.

HF854-Sailer (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Video display device collection, transportation and recycling provided; and civil penalties imposed.

HF855-Atkins (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 52 east and west frontage roads in Dakota County construction provided and bonds issued.

HF856-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Homestead property taxes limited to a percentage of homeowner's income.

HF857-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Minnesota Financial Crimes Oversight Council annual report to the Legislature required.

HF858-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Big Bog State Recreation Area funding provided.

HF859-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul RiverCentre loan repayment forgiven; city of St. Paul funding provided to defease, pay, redeem or refund city bonds.

HF860-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul RiverCentre loan repayment forgiven; city of St. Paul funding provided to defease, pay, redeem or refund city bonds.

HF861-Gunther (R)**Finance**

St. James road improvements funding provided.

HF862-Liebling (DFL)**Taxes**

Taxpayer assistance toll-free telephone lines required.

HF863-Hortman (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

California vehicle emissions standards adopted and updates provided to comply with the federal Clean Air Act.

HF864-McNamara (R)**Finance**

Hastings Veterans Home supportive housing funding provided.

HF865-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Greenleaf Lake State Park land acquisition funding provided.

HF866-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Howard Lake ditch work grant provided.

HF867-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Burglary in the second degree crime definition modified.

HF868-Buesgens (R)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Trust funds for post-employment benefits authorized for political subdivisions.

HF869-Sailer (DFL)**Finance**

Urban and tribal Indian housing programs funding provided.

HF870-Fritz (DFL)**Finance**

Medford wastewater treatment facility funding provided.

HF871-Rukavina (DFL)**Taxes**

National Service Trust educational awards income tax subtraction authorized.

HF872-Anzelc (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Ainsworth Lumber Company; extra unemployment benefits provided for certain workers.

HF873-Rukavina (DFL)**Finance**

Centers for Independent Living funding provided.

HF874-Anzelc (DFL)**Finance**

Northome municipal building funding provided.

HF875-Slocum (DFL)**Finance**

Fort Snelling Upper Bluff emergency building stabilization funding provided.

HF876-Swails (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association general plan service credit purchase authorized for a St. Paul employee.

HF877-Norton (DFL)**Finance**

Speech-language pathologists loan forgiveness program and account established.

HF878-Doty (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Board of Animal Health consultants expanded to include the commissioner of agriculture.

HF879-Nelson (DFL)**Taxes**

Contractor payment withholdings required.

HF880-Atkins (DFL)**Finance**

Trunk Highway 55 and Yankee Doodle Road interchange funding provided.

HF881-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Land Planning Act and related statutes modified, and erroneous and obsolete references corrected.

HF882-Hilstrom (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan livable communities fund governing provisions modified, funds transfer authorized and one-time transfer for local planning assistance grants and loans provided.

HF883-Marquart (DFL)**Finance**

Red River basin digital elevation model funding provided.

HF884-Otremba (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council funding provided.

HF885-Hilty (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Cloquet local sales tax authorized.

HF886-Hausman (DFL)**Finance**

Capital improvements funding provided.

HF887-Kohls (R)**Finance**

Highway and bridge construction funding provided.

HF888-Kohls (R)**Finance**

Highway and bridge construction projects funding provided.

HF889-Murphy, M. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Public Employees Retirement Association administrative provisions modified.

HF890-Magnus (R)**Finance**

Regional transportation planning funding provided.

HF891-Nelson (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin Technical College Brooklyn Park campus asset preservation funding provided.

HF892-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Teacher professional development funding provided.

HF893-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Aquatic plant harvest and destruction permit provisions modified.

HF894-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Head Start funding increased.

HF895-Eken (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

County withdrawal from regional jail system authorized.

HF896-Doty (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

All-terrain vehicle account purposes modified, and gasoline usage attributable to all-terrain vehicle operation amount modified.

HF897-Simpson (R)**Taxes**

Federal income tax conformity provided relating to 2006 and 2007 provisions authorizing expensing of certain depreciable assets.

HF898-Hilstrom (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

State and local jail and prison inmates required to be housed in publicly owned and operated facilities, and private prison contracting and Prairie Correctional Facility contract renewal prohibited.

HF899-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Fairmont sports complex funding provided.

HF900-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Ceylon softball field lighting funding provided.

HF901-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Tuition increases at public higher education institutions limited.

HF902-Gunther (R)**Biosciences & Emerging Technology**

Minnesota Biomedical Science Research Facilities Authority and the biomedical sciences research project funding program established, funds provided and reports required.

HF903-Severson (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Federal Montgomery GI Bill for the Selected Reserves; Congressional reform exhorted to permit members of the National Guard and Reserves to receive and use federal educational benefits following separation from active status and discharge.

HF904-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Land acquisition, landowners' bill of rights and mineral interest record requirements modified; state park additions and deletions provided; and public and private sales and conveyances of state lands authorized.

HF905-Scalze (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Cities to operate preventative health services programs authorized.

HF906-Thissen (DFL)**Finance**

Birth defects information system money appropriated.

HF907-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Independently licensed mental health care professionals authorized to deliver service to inmates.

HF908-Liebling (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Quality assurance system to include additional service recipients expanded; sunset dates removed.

HF909-Jaros (DFL)**Finance**

Duluth Children's Museum to expand the early childhood learning spaces.

HF910-Jaros (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Respite care in relative custody assistance cases provided.

HF911-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Self-directed personal supports option established; Minnesota supplemental aid standard modified.

HF912-Hornstein (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MFIP and child care provisions modified; foreign operating corporation provisions changed and clarified.

HF913-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Moratorium regarding beds and expending group residential housing supplemental rates waived.

HF914-Fritz (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

MinnesotaCare four-month uninsured requirement for children eliminated.

HF915-Ruth (R)**Health & Human Services**

Payment rates for nursing facilities in Steele County to the geographic group III median rate increased.

HF916-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Child care centers and homes inspections and reports required.

HF917-Clark (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Lice and scabies treatment products that contain the pesticide Lindane prohibited.

HF918-Norton (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Essential community provider designation extended.

HF919-Welti (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Elgin, Eyota, Byron and Oronoco authorized to act as small cities for purposes of use of revenues from certain economic development districts.

HF920-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child care provisions modified and MFIP and basic sliding fee child care programs consolidated.

Tuesday, February 13

HF921-Hilstrom (DFL)**Taxes**

Tree-planting income tax credit provided.

HF922-Thissen (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Mental health provisions modified, provider rate increases authorized, medical assistance coverage modified and evidence-based practice implemented.

HF923-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Mental health fatality review team established.

HF924-Dominguez (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Unpaid work for cash assistance prohibited.

HF925-Lenczewski (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Renewable energy standard modified.

HF926-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Finance**

Septic systems' impact on the environment study provided through the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

HF927-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Equity, transition and referendum revenue programs equalizing factor increased.

HF928-Dill (DFL)**Taxes**

Shooting range targets sales specified as a sale of property for resale.

HF929-Ruud (DFL)**Taxes**

Minnetonka water treatment facility construction materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF930-Dean (R)**Taxes**

Health insurance premiums income tax subtraction authorized.

HF931-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited and civil and criminal penalties imposed.

HF932-Hilstrom (DFL)**Finance**

Independent School District No. 279, Osseo, Northwest Hennepin Family Center funding provided.

HF933-Tillberry (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Vehicle Protection Product Act adopted.

HF934-Clark (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Polybrominated diphenyl ether manufacture and sale restricted.

HF935-Scalze (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Metropolitan Intercounty Association renamed the Minnesota Intercounty Association.

HF936-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Crisis Intervention Team State Council established.

HF937-Brynaert (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota State University, Mankato, Trafton Hall phase 2 funding provided.

HF938-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities tuition stability provided.

HF939-Kranz (DFL)**Finance**

Deed tax percentage adjusted, rental housing assistance provided and housing account for leverage opportunity established.

HF940-Lenczewski (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Schools educational mission and competitive extracurricular programs advisory task force established.

HF941-Lenczewski (DFL)**E-12 Education**

Open enrollment transfer student ineligibility for postseason tournament competition criteria specified.

HF942-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

HIV information and referral service provided.

HF943-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Deemed dividend corporate franchise tax deduction for foreign operating corporations limited.

HF944-Juhnke (DFL)**Finance**

Fishing; Let's Go Fishing grants provided to promote fishing opportunities.

HF945-Juhnke (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Fishing opportunities endowment account established.

HF946-Lieder (DFL)

Finance
Motor fuel and motor vehicle taxes increased, county transportation taxes authorized, transportation impact fees imposed, and highway and bridge construction provided.

HF947-Howes (R)

Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs
Local government nonconforming lot use requirements limited.

HF948-Moe (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Clean water legacy account modified, lottery net proceeds deposit modified and clean water funding provided.

HF949-Moe (DFL)

Environment & Natural Resources
Great Outdoors Council and fund established; Clean Water Council modified.

Thursday, February 15

HF950-Carlson (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Fourth Judicial District obsolete references and provisions removed, unintentional repeal corrected and bail proceeds payment resumed for Hennepin County municipalities.

HF951-Mullery (DFL)

Public Safety & Civil Justice
Controlled substance sales criminal offender geographic restrictions policies established, increased sentences provided for further drug sale crimes in a restricted area and criminal penalties imposed.

HF952-Howes (R)

Finance
Ice skating rinks and arena grants provided.

HF953-Kahn (DFL)

Finance
State government general legislative and administrative funding provided, state and local government operations regulated and grant management process established, and money appropriated.

HF954-Welti (DFL)

Finance
Agricultural research funding provided to the University of Minnesota.

HF955-Nornes (R)

Taxes
Federal income tax conformity provided relating to federal rules on section 179 expensing retroactively.

HF956-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Bloomington fiscal disparities pool contribution obligation eliminated.

HF957-Zellers (R)

Taxes
Homestead property tax maximum imposed for qualified homeowners age 65 and older.

HF958-Solberg (DFL)

Finance
State agencies deficiency funding provided.

HF959-Bunn (DFL)

Finance
I-94 corridor transportation and transit improvements funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF960-Simpson (R)

Environment & Natural Resources
Deer hunting license fees for non-resident youth provided at resident rate.

HF961-Ruud (DFL)

Finance
Eden Prairie veterans memorial funding provided, bonds issued and money appropriated.

HF962-Lenczewski (DFL)

Taxes
Commercial and industrial properties general tax converted to a site value tax, site value standards authorized, and estimated market value attributable to land portion reallocated.

HF963-Ruth (R)

Finance
Local bridge replacement and rehabilitation and local road improvement program funding provided, bonds issued.

HF964-Ruth (R)

Finance
Motor vehicle sales tax proceeds allocated.

HF965-McFarlane (R)
Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections
Election judges not affiliated with a major political party appointment provided.

HF966-Howes (R)

Commerce & Labor
Nurse overtime orders of compliance authorized.

HF967-Koenen (DFL)

Taxes
Income tax additions eliminated.

HF968-Koenen (DFL)

Taxes
Grain bins and fencing materials sales tax exemption provided.

HF969-Simpson (R)

Taxes
Tier I homestead resorts market value modified.

HF970-Demmer (R)

Health & Human Services
Dodge and other specified counties nursing facilities payment rates increased to the Olmsted County median rate.

HF971-Hosch (DFL)

Finance
Senior citizen programs funding provided.

HF972-Huntley (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental disabilities, community service providers, and nursing facilities rate increase provided; and money appropriated.

HF973-Clark (DFL)

Finance
Employment support for persons with mental illness authorized.

HF974-Otremba (DFL)

Health & Human Services
Children's therapeutic services and supports rate increase provided.

HF975-Koenen (DFL)

Finance
Comprehensive school reform funding provided to replace reduced federal funds.

HF976-Slawik (DFL)

E-12 Education
After-school community learning grant program established.

HF977-Davnie (DFL)

Finance
Special education excessive costs state payment required and program growth factor increased.

HF978-Hortman (DFL)

Finance
Independent School District No. 11, Anoka-Hennepin, authorized to purchase and restore native prairie and wetland adjacent to Riverview Elementary School; bonds issued; and money appropriated.

HF979-Winkler (DFL)

Finance
Adult basic education aid modified and GED payment increased.

HF980-Knuth (DFL)

Finance
Referendum aid adjustment modified for open enrollment students.

HF981-Brown (DFL)

Finance
State special education revenue formulas fully funded, and special education aid appropriation made open and standing.

HF982-Norton (DFL)

Finance
Independent School District No. 535, Rochester, property tax levy certification deadline date extended.

HF983-Ward (DFL)

E-12 Education
Career academies and workplace connection three-year pilot project established.

HF984-Norton (DFL)

E-12 Education
Student ACT and SAT entrance test fees reimbursed, and money appropriated.

HF985-Benson (DFL)

E-12 Education
Board of School Administrators rule-making authority extended.

HF986-Erickson (R)

E-12 Education
Dual-credit course and program requirements provided for high school students and 3R high school grants provided.

HF987-Davnie (DFL)

Finance
Contract alternative program students over the age of 21 authorized to receive instruction until graduation.

HF988-Winkler (DFL)

E-12 Education
Technology task force and grants established for schools and school district technology plan developed.

HF989-Hilstrom (DFL)

E-12 Education
Open enrollment students authorized to participate in academic courses and extracurricular and cocurricular activities on the same basis as resident district students.

HF990-Norton (DFL)

E-12 Education
Parent and family involvement school district policies required.

HF991-Thissen (DFL)

Commerce & Labor
Interior designers certification changed to licensing requirements.

HF992-Otremba (DFL)**Health & Human Services**

Abortion; state-sponsored health program funding prohibited for use in funding abortions.

HF993-Norton (DFL)**Housing Policy & Finance & Public Health Finance Division**

Radon control federal building codes adopted.

HF994-Urdahl (R)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption Act adopted prohibited actions for weight gain as a result of consuming certain foods.

HF995-Hilty (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Peak Oil; Governor memorialized, by resolution, to take action to prepare a plan of response and preparation to meet the challenges of Peak Oil.

HF996-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Tax data classification and disclosure provisions clarified and modified, and class 1b homestead declarations administration and classification provided.

HF997-Kahn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Off-sale wine licenses authorized for supermarkets.

HF998-Atkins (DFL)**Taxes**

Local government purchases sales tax eliminated.

HF999-Mahoney (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Child's residence in foreign country consideration required when deviating from presumptive child support amount.

HF1000-Welti (DFL)**Finance**

Consolidating school districts account flexibility created; and Independent School District No. 2899, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, fund balance adjustment authorized.

HF1001-Carlson (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Teacher retirement plans reemployed annuitant earnings limitation amount increased for part-time and substitute teachers.

HF1002-Hornstein (DFL)**Taxes**

Alternative fuel vehicle income tax credit provided.

HF1003-Koenen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Minnesota River Trail segment established connecting Granite Falls and Montevideo.

HF1004-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Predatory mortgage lending practices prohibited.

HF1005-Lenczewski (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Municipal postemployment benefits for retired officers and employees authorized.

HF1006-Dettmer (R)**E-12 Education**

Statewide health and physical education requirements provided, school wellness policies posted on Education Department Web site, grant program established for local school wellness policies.

HF1007-Bunn (DFL)**Taxes**

Tax conformity provided for tax year 2006 to the federal teacher expense deduction, tuition subtraction, and other provisions of the Tax Relief and Health Care Act, Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunity Act and Pension Protection Plan.

HF1008-Johnson (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Child placement background check requirements modified.

HF1009-Hansen (DFL)**Taxes**

Sesquicentennial celebration income tax checkoff provided and fund established.

HF1010-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Gang and Drug Oversight Council statewide coordinator added to the law enforcement retirement fund.

HF1011-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

I-35W corridor transit way feasibility study funding provided.

HF1012-Otremba (DFL)**Taxes**

Rural land abutting public waters valuation provided.

HF1013-Otremba (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Body piercing services prohibited for persons under the age of 18 without parental consent, and criminal and civil penalties imposed.

HF1014-Morgan (DFL)**Finance**

Easements; modifying the price of surplus easement or property acquired for transportation purposes and offered for reconveyance to original owner.

HF1015-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Restroom access for customers regulated.

HF1016-Hansen (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Forest pest control measures provided.

HF1017-Brod (R)**Finance**

Le Sueur County lake cleanup funding provided.

HF1018-Hausman (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

State general obligation bond proceeds provisions modified.

HF1019-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory offender registration required for certain persons under the age of 18.

HF1020-Johnson (DFL)**Finance**

St. Paul summer youth employment grants provided, and money appropriated.

HF1021-Dill (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Lake Superior commercial fishing provisions modified.

HF1022-Knuth (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Rental vehicle no-fault auto insurance coverage regulated.

HF1023-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Child support enforcement programs funding provided, and money appropriated.

HF1024-Wagenius (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Natural resources; agency service requirements, drainage repair and abandonment requirements, wetlands replacement requirements and exemptions modified; civil enforcement provided; and money appropriated.

HF1025-Peppin (R)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Nuclear fuel storage; existing prohibition preventing Public Utilities Commission from issuing certificate of need for new nuclear power plant abolished.

HF1026-Hortman (DFL)**Finance**

Anoka County bicycle and pedestrian trail funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1027-Kahn (DFL)**Taxes**

Cosmetic procedures sales tax imposed.

HF1028-Urdahl (R)**Finance**

Darwin wastewater holding ponds design funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1029-Hilstrom (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Toll-free telephone line maintained to receive allegations of theft of public funds or property and rewards authorized.

HF1030-Mullery (DFL)**Taxes**

Low-income rental property classification 4d extended.

HF1031-Anderson, S. (R)**Finance**

I-494 median safety barrier construction funding provided.

HF1032-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

Nonresident undergraduate tuition rates at state colleges and universities regulated.

HF1033-Simon (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Employer retaliation protections expanded.

HF1034-Peterson, A. (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Heating and cooling policy for state building projects established.

HF1035-Solberg (DFL)**Environment & Natural Resources**

Itasca County; tax-forfeited land assurance fee exemptions provided for certain exchanged land.

HF1036-Pelowski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Lobbying activities related to a ballot question exempted from campaign finance reporting requirements.

HF1037-Hosch (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Reconveyance procedures established for real property having errors or omissions in the title.

HF1038-Hosch (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Trunk Highway 23 encroached-upon right-of-way reconveyance required.

HF1039-Brown (DFL)**Finance**

Albert Lea remedial waste systems construction funding provided, bonds issued.

HF1040-Howes (R)**Finance**

Ice skating rinks and arenas grants provided.

HF1041-Abeler (R)**Health & Human Services**

Controlled substances prescription electronic reporting system established.

HF1042-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

Hennepin and Ramsey Counties mortgage registry and deed tax authority expiration removed.

HF1043-Simon (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Predatory offenders required to register electronic mail addresses and related information to law enforcement.

HF1044-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Student health insurance grant programs established.

HF1045-Dominguez (DFL)**Local Government & Metropolitan Affairs**

State lottery gross proceeds in lieu of sales tax distribution for metropolitan parks and open space clarified, and parks and open space commission member compensation modified.

HF1046-Hornstein (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Dog and Cat Breeders Act providing standards of care, and appropriating money.

HF1047-Tschumper (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence certification recognized, fees provided, and drug use and prescription regulated.

HF1048-Pelowski (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Department of Employee Relations abolished and duties transferred.

HF1049-Liebling (DFL)**Finance**

Pipeline violations fines increased.

HF1050-Paymar (DFL)**Finance**

Alcoholic beverage tax increased, county probation supervision and treatment services grants provided.

HF1051-Hilty (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Indian Affairs Council membership and other provisions modified.

HF1052-Thao (DFL)**Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology & Elections**

Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans appointment process and membership modified.

HF1053-Olin (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Theft of a computer that contains identity information about the owner or any other person felony penalty imposed.

HF1054-Morgan (DFL)**Taxes**

Burnsville special tax increment financing districts authorized.

HF1055-Kahn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

State lottery ticket sales on state fairgrounds authorized.

HF1056-Slawik (DFL)**Finance**

Early childhood education provisions modified.

HF1057-Urdahl (R)**E-12 Education**

New teachers induction program established relating to high-need subject areas and schools.

HF1058-Thissen (DFL)**Public Safety & Civil Justice**

Automatic enforcement of official traffic-control devices authorized.

HF1059-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Drivers required to possess a valid and unexpired driver's license.

HF1060-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver's license required information modified.

HF1061-Madore (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver's license cancellation provisions modified.

HF1062-Simon (DFL)**Transportation Finance Division**

Driver education provisions modified.



Politicians access Super Bowl tickets

Nearly one-third of the [Indiana General Assembly](#) was able to see in person the Indianapolis Colts win the Super Bowl.

The team offered to sell two tickets at \$600 face value to state lawmakers, members of Congress, the City-County Council and some municipal groups. About 175 tickets were sold.

According to [WISH-TV](#), a spokeswoman for Colts owner Jim Irsay said he "wanted to offer tickets to public servants who make the community better."

The tickets are not gifts; therefore, legislators and councilors do not need to report it.

"Because of all the scrutiny this has been under, I'm certainly going to put it down," Joanne Sanders, a member of the City-County Council, told the station.

The Indianapolis Star [reported](#) that 10 state senators and 35 representatives were among those [purchasing tickets](#). The Indiana Legislature has 100 representatives and 50 senators.

Not surprisingly, a [forum](#) on the newspaper's Web site contained posts from upset Colts fans.

"I don't see how anyone can not look at this as a perk even if they had to purchase the tickets at face value. They didn't have to stay in the cold and have their names entered into a lottery to have the opportunity to buy the tickets. They should have been at the mercy of the lottery process just like everyone else. I'm tired of our politicians acting like CEO's of companies," wrote someone posting under the name "Fairness."

Others said they would have done the same thing.

"How can you blame them for buying the tickets offered to them? If someone offered me tickets for the game, at face value, I'd have been in Sunny Miami. And so would you! This is a non-issue," wrote someone posting as "Reality Check."

[Rep. Ralph Foley](#) (R-Martinsville), who reportedly accepted the offer, speculated it could have been a way to thank legislators for passing legislation for a new stadium.

"Evidently they don't check your voting record when they offer them, or perhaps I wouldn't have been on the list," Foley told [WRTV-TV](#).

(M. Cook)

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
175 STATE OFFICE BUILDING
100 REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.
ST. PAUL, MN 55155-1298

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: MARGARET ANDERSON KELLIHER
MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH
MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

The friendly skies

Publicly accessible airports in the state.....	155
Number that are paved	98
Number that are lighted turf	17
Year the Metropolitan Airports Commission was created by the Legislature to promote safe, efficient, environmentally responsible air transportation services in the Twin Cities metropolitan area	1943
Passengers, in millions, served at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in 2006	35.6
Millions in 2002.....	32.6
Millions projected in 2020.....	50
Estimated takeoffs and landings, in millions, at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and its six reliever airports in 2006	1.2
Number at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport	475,656
Estimated number at Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie	144,000
Estimated number at Holman Field in St. Paul	126,000
Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport rank among busiest airfields in the country ...	12
Airline companies that provide regularly scheduled service to the airport.....	13
Percent of service provided by Northwest Airlines, as approximate	80
Number of metropolitan markets flyers can travel to nonstop from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport	131
Number that are domestic.....	116
Estimated millions of visitors that come to the Twin Cities metropolitan area annually via the airport.....	6.5
Percent of travelers living outside the area.....	70
Estimated commission revenues in 2007, in millions.....	\$252.8
Percent from airport concessions	45
Percent from airline rates and charges	34
State and local tax revenues received by the commission.....	0
Millions, as approximate, spent thus far by the commission to soundproof homes and schools against aircraft noise from planes using Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.....	\$340
Single-family homes that have been mitigated from noise since 1996.....	7,690
Cost per home in the highest noise-level exposure areas, as approximate.....	\$45,000
Cost to homeowner	0
Year the nation's first Air National Guard Squadron charter was issued to the Minnesota Air Guard	1921

Sources: Presentation to the House Transportation Finance Division Feb. 8 by Jeff Hamiel, executive director, Metropolitan Airports Commission; [Office of Aeronautics, Minnesota Department of Transportation](#); [Minnesota Aviation History Museum](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For general information, call House Public Information Services at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

To have a copy of Session Weekly mailed to you, subscribe online at: www.house.mn/hinfo/subscribesw.asp or call: (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550.

If you enjoy Session Weekly, please consider helping to defray production and mailing costs with a biennial voluntary subscription of \$20 or more.

Make your check payable to Minnesota House of Representatives, and mail it to:
House Public Information Services:
175 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Session Weekly online is available at: www.house.mn.

Subscribe to Session Daily e-mail alerts at: www.house.mn/list/join.asp?listname=sessiondaily.

To obtain a copy of a bill, call the Chief Clerk's Office at (651) 296-2314.

To find out about bill introductions or the status of a specific bill, call the House Index Office at (651) 296-6646.

The House of Representatives can be found on the Web at: www.house.mn.

People who are deaf and hard of hearing may ask questions or leave messages by calling the Minnesota Relay service at 711 or (800) 627-3529 (TTY).

Check your local listings to watch television coverage of House committees, floor sessions and select press conferences.