

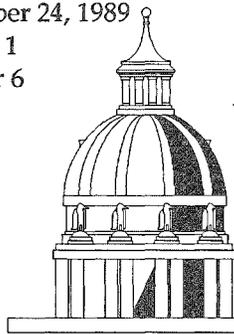
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Mini-Session  
(November 14 - 17)

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Number 6



# Interim Report

Minnesota House of Representatives

## Moorhead

### Valley and Vikings

Moorhead, home to 30,000 people, nestles in the heart of the Red River Valley amid some of the richest farmland in the world.

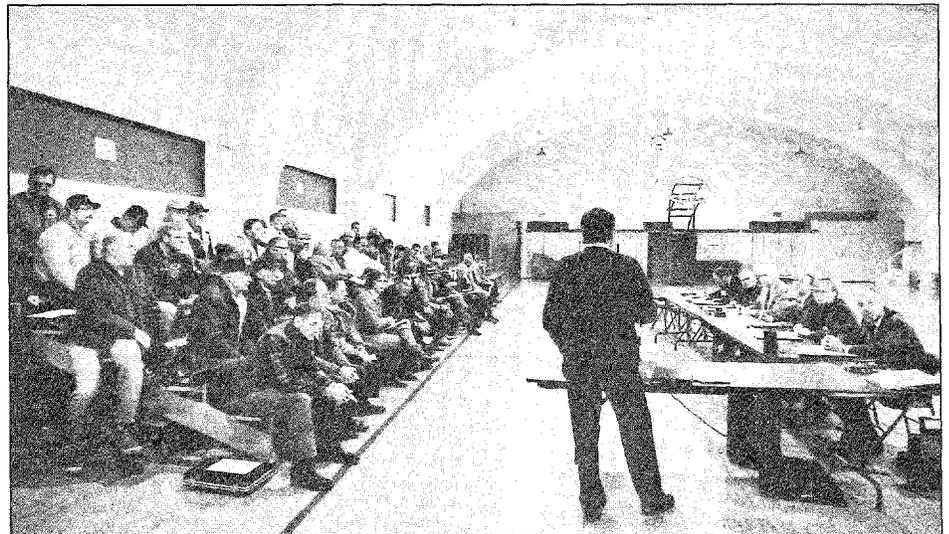
Farmers in this fertile northern valley began experimenting with sugarbeets as early as 1880; by 1920, they grew sugarbeets in commercial quantities.

The American Sugar Company, predecessor of American Crystal Sugar built the valley's first sugar processing plant in East Grand Forks in 1926. Due to the success and profitability of beet crops, American Crystal Sugar opened a second factory in Moorhead in 1944. The company currently employs nearly 500 people.

The Heritage-Hjemkomst (pronounced YEM-komst) Interpretive Center is the city's newest addition. It's the first regional center focusing on the Red River Valley's history. Hjemkomst means "homecoming" in Norwegian.

The facility houses the "Hjemkomst," a replica of a Viking ship that Moorhead's Robert Asp began building in 1971. Asp dreamt of sailing the ship to Norway. In 1980, he sailed on Lake Superior, but later that year he died of leukemia. In the summer of 1982, Asp's family and friends made the journey on the Hjemkomst to Bergen, Norway, fulfilling his dream.

Moorhead also offers three institutions of higher education and many arts and cultural attractions such as a community theater, symphony orchestra, opera and dance companies from Duluth, and art galleries.



Talk of grasshopper infestation and the Minnesota Grasshopper Control Program attracted many people to a meeting of the Agriculture Committee's Select Grasshopper Subcommittee at the Hawley Community Center Nov. 17.

## Highlights

### Town meeting

Residents from Moorhead and surrounding areas talked about workers' compensation, child care, and other concerns at a town meeting Nov. 15.

Some people expressed the need for major reform in the workers' compensation system. The only good way to deal with workers' comp is to look at the entire system, says Rep. Robert Vanasek (DFL-New Prague). He told the audience that the issue will be a priority in 1990.

Another part of the discussion focused on a new law that provides child care assistance for college students working toward an undergraduate certificate or degree who have attended school full time for less than 12 quarters or the equivalent. "The student child care funding legislation has placed a negative impact on students...particularly at four-year institutions," says Susan Rostvedt, assistant director of financial aid at

Moorhead State University. It ruled out 45 to 50 percent of the eligible students in the state university system this fall.

The Minnesota Association of Financial Aid Administration supports elimination of the four-year educational limit and child care program, and advocates eligibility for all undergraduate students. Rostvedt says the Legislature should consider 12 quarters of child care funding, not 12 quarters of attendance. Rep. Diane Wray Williams (DFL-Moorhead) says lawmakers intend to correct the legislation in the next session.

Echoing the concern about child care issues, another resident encouraged legislators to look at more creative ways of providing affordable child care.

Further discussion at the meeting touched on topics such as the delivery of social services, abortion, and taxes. After the informal forum, legislators continued to chat with smaller groups of residents.

## Lake Region Arts Council

Kirstin Rootham, Glyndon, performed a flute solo as part of the Lake Region Arts Council's (LRAC) presentation to the Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Transportation and Semi-State Division in Moorhead, Nov. 16.

Rootham participates in the LRAC's artist/mentor program. The program awards grants to high school students and then pairs them with local participating professional artists. The artist tutors the student over the summer, helping the student grow artistically. Grants go to students in various artistic endeavors, including oil painting, theatre, voice and instrumental performance, and photography. Last year, 29 students received grants under the program.

The council serves a nine-county area in west central Minnesota that promotes local arts projects in smaller communities, says Sonja Peterson, LRAC program coordinator. Moorhead, with a population of 30,000, is the largest of the 83 communities the LRAC serves. About 88 percent of the communities have a population of fewer than 2,000. The LRAC publishes a newsletter to inform people of events in their areas.

The council's goal is to get the arts into communities that are too small to support their own arts program. For example, the LRAC made a grant to a volunteer visual arts group in Battle Lake. This city, with a population of only 700, attracts over 20,000 people to an annual two-day festival, according to Peterson.

## Workers' compensation

Workers' compensation costs of Minnesota businesses are too high and give an unfair advantage to border state businesses, according to several Moorhead area business people. They testified at a Labor-Management Relations Committee meeting Nov. 16 in Moorhead.

In 1980, Kevin Goodno's family-owned business, Moorhead Linoleum & Tile, paid workers' comp costs of 4.62 cents per \$1 of wages. This year, he reports, they're paying 16.99 cents per \$1 of wages. In comparison, North Dakota businesses pay only 5.67 cents per \$1,

even after a recent 72 percent increase in workers' comp rates.

High workers' compensation costs have hurt Moorhead when trying to retain and attract new businesses, says Beth Grosen of the Moorhead Economic Development Authority. Food Services of America approached the city in 1986 about building a new \$2.8 million facility. Grosen says Moorhead offered \$500,000 in incentives to the company, including free land, debt financing, and income and property tax credits. But the company turned down the city's offer because of Minnesota's workers' comp system and, instead, built their new facility across the border in Fargo.

Leo Eide of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) says the state is working toward full enforcement of the mandatory coverage provision of the workers' comp law. Some businesses are able to underbid competitors because they don't provide workers' comp coverage. Most of those are small, Minnesota-owned businesses having fewer than 20 employees. But, he says, problems exist in border communities. The DLI is increasing enforcement of workers' comp there. And Eide notes that a recently passed North Dakota law requires North Dakota-based companies to provide workers' comp coverage when they work in Minnesota.

## Tri-College University

In 1968, North Dakota Governor George Sinner, then a member of the state's Board of Higher Education, addressed a North Dakota State University (NDSU) graduating class. He talked about creating one university from the three facilities in Moorhead and Fargo, which include Concordia College, Moorhead State University (MSU), and NDSU.

One year later, the Tri-College University (TCU) structure was developed, then incorporated in 1970, says Marcia Kierscht, TCU provost. Presently, the three institutions form an academic community of over 1,200 faculty members and 22,000 students.

TCU is the only consortium in the country that the North Central Association independently accredits as a separate degree-granting institution (the same accrediting body that accredits each of

the member institutions). Consortium affiliates say TCU's objective is to allow students to go to school in a smaller setting with personal service, yet provide options that are usually associated with larger universities.

TCU is registered with the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board under the provisions of the Private Institutions Registration Act and offers two degrees, both in educational administration.

Kierscht cited the library system as one of TCU's most cost effective programs. "TCU enables the libraries to share 7,500 periodicals and nearly one million bound volumes, which makes the collection comparable to some of the most selective universities in the country," she says.

Dr. Roland Dille, MSU president, says that through TCU, students are freer to pursue excellence in courses. Dille and Kierscht addressed members of the Education Committee's Higher Education Division during a Nov. 15 meeting in Moorhead.

## Rural EMS

A lot of people living in rural areas don't have street addresses, and that's a serious problem for rural emergency medical services (EMS) providers. Several area EMS providers met with the Rural Emergency Medical Services Task Force in Moorhead Nov. 17.

When rural people call for an ambulance in an emergency, they often can't provide an identifiable address, says Faith Opp, a Clay County 911 operator. If a county doesn't assign street names, the only address rural people have is a rural route and box number. People will say generally where they live, such as "a mile north of the Larson farm," but that's not good enough, she says. Valuable time is lost if operators have to get more information from callers in an emergency.

EMS providers also told the task force that increased training requirements for ambulance drivers and attendants will hurt recruitment and retention of those personnel. Because volunteers usually fill those positions, they can't afford the extra training costs and time requirements. Volunteers now average only two years of service due to burnout and the high volume of calls.

To keep these volunteers, EMS providers want the state to provide more money to pay training and other costs and a pension similar to that of volunteer firefighters. The providers say that increased fines for seat belt and driving-while-intoxicated (DWI) violations could help pay the extra costs since those violations commonly lead to situations requiring emergency medical services.

### Medical examiners

The State Board of Medical Examiners wants to restructure itself due to an increasing number of assigned duties.

During a Nov. 17 meeting in Moorhead, the Health and Human Services Committee heard testimony on the bill that would make those changes. If approved, the legislation would increase the board's size from 11 to 16 members, the number of medical doctors on the board from seven to 10, and the number of public members from three to five. It also would change procedural requirements for reporting disciplinary action and encourage the governor to make appointments to the board that reflect the state's geography and a broad mix of expertise.

A proposal from the Project Work Panel (PWP) recommends that each board member receive compensation equal to three-quarters the daily rate that the state commissioner of health receives for time spent on the board or board-related meetings. The PWP is a special task force of the United States Federation of State Medical Boards. In the past year, the PWP studied basic structural and functional outlines of 65 medical boards, contacted 56 boards in telephone surveys on several specific issues, reviewed 38 states' medical statutes, and analyzed the potential impact of the proposal if implemented in 18 widely differing state settings.

Other task force recommendations include issues relating to board structure, funding, and personnel.

### Gambling equipment

The State of Minnesota will become the sole supplier of gambling equipment next year; some people are concerned about that. Distributors and conductors of charitable gambling operations voiced concerns Nov. 17 at a meeting of the General Legislation, Veterans Affairs and Gaming Committee in Moorhead.

When the state becomes the sole supplier of gambling equipment, it will have better control of such equipment, according to Don Trimble from the Department of Revenue. The state has the option of warehousing the supplies or directing equipment manufacturers to do so. And Trimble pointed out that the state doesn't collect taxes on illegal games. Accountability built into the new system could increase tax collection and would work as a revenue raiser, he says.

The new system will work like the state's system of regulating the tobacco industry, says Rep. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park). Wholesalers will continue operations, but the state can audit supplies and prevent the use of illegal supplies.

Will the state provide the same level of service that organizations now receive from private distributors? Jim Lisko, Moorhead Youth Hockey Association, currently gets one-hour service from his distributor and says that anything less could hurt his business. He also asked whether the state would provide the variety of games that distributors now offer, and whether it would take an active interest in promoting the industry's general welfare.

Will the state put distributors out of business? Ken Lien, a distributor from Moorhead, says that while the new law now makes the state the sole supplier of gambling equipment, it might lead someday to the state becoming the sole distributor. He also questions whether the state will provide the same service to retailers that he and other distributors do. Lien carries a variety of over 1,000 games for retailers and provides them with personalized services such as getting a special game printed for a retailer and offering miscellaneous equipment that the state might not provide.

### Local elections

Lawmakers heard testimony on a bill Nov. 16 that would establish a local government election day for county, municipal, and school district officers, and officers of all other political subdivisions during a General Legislation, Veterans Affairs and Gaming division meeting in Moorhead.

Supporters say the bill would increase voter awareness and participation. If it becomes law, the Local Government Election Day would occur on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in odd years, and the primary would occur on the first Tuesday after the second Monday in September. The first local Government Election Day would be in 1993.

The bill would also require uniform precincts and polling places for all state and local elections and set the same candidate filing periods and other timelines in odd years as they now exist for state elections in even years. Author Rep. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) says establishing precinct boundaries to eliminate voter confusion is the bill's most difficult problem.

Allan Lund, a Moorhead School Board member, told the committee that although improvements could be made, the school board is pleased with the current system and would like it to remain as is. The board supports some of the bill's provisions, but not others. Losing the flexibility of holding yearly bond issues is one concern, he says, as well as costs and leadership roles. And Lund says the bill would not increase voter turnout: "The people who consider it a civic duty to vote are going to do that regardless of the day."

# Western Minnesota Mini-session moments



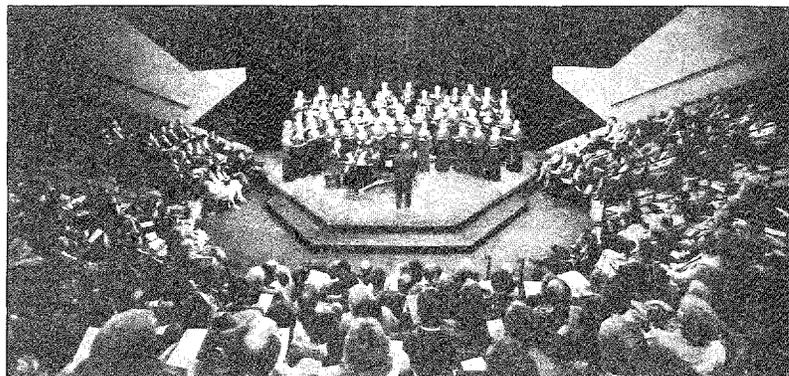
A sunset tour. Members of the Rural Resource Development Division of the Economic Development Committee surveyed proposed Red River development projects in the Fargo-Moorhead area, Nov. 16.



Braving single-digit temperatures, members of the Taxes Committee walk across the first toll bridge built in the United States in 40 years. The bridge spans the Red River between Fargo and Moorhead. The committee toured tax increment districts in the area Nov. 16.

The dragon's head of the replica Viking ship "Hjemkomst" looms over a reception in the Heritage-Hjemkomst Interpretive Center. Here, House members met their hosts for a "Dinner With a Legislator" event on Nov. 15.



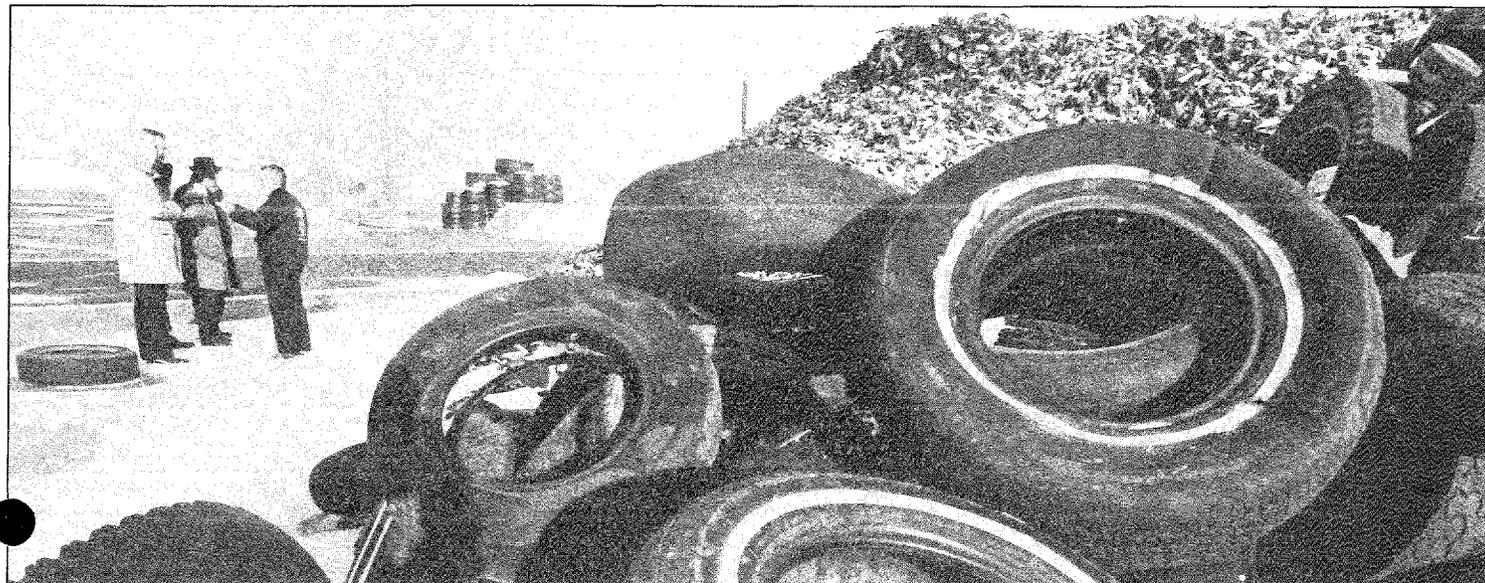


The Master Chorale, a community choral ensemble that includes 60 singers from the Fargo-Moorhead area, performs for House members and staff. They were part of a "Music and Dance Extravaganza" that followed a community banquet at Moorhead State University Nov. 16.

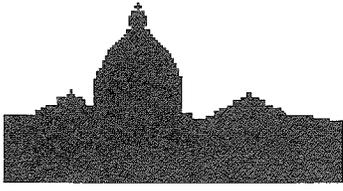
One on one. Moorhead resident Gene Sieben, *right*, talked taxes with Rep. Edgar Olson (DFL-Fosston), *left*, after the Nov. 15 town meeting in the Moorhead Senior High School auditorium.



After a Nov. 16 tour of Buffalo River State Park, members of the State Departments Division of the Appropriations Committee stopped at the Detroit Lakes Fish Hatchery. The hatchery, built in 1924, is on the Department of Natural Resources' list of proposed bonding projects for 1990.



Bob Engelstad, president of Trash Depot, Inc., Moorhead, explains the process of making shredded rubber from recycled tires to members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. They toured the resource recovery center Nov. 15.



# Committee Action

## AGRICULTURE

Tuesday, Nov. 14 (Fergus Falls)

- Discussed the bovine growth hormone issue and federal milk marketing issues.

Friday, Nov. 17 (Dilworth)

- Discussed HF31 (Marsh, IR-Sauk Rapids) that would prohibit further draining of wetlands in Minnesota.

### Select Grasshopper Subcommittee

Friday, Nov. 17 (Hawley)

- Heard testimony regarding this summer's grasshopper control program.

## APPROPRIATIONS

### Agriculture, Transportation & Semi-State Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Heard a presentation from the Lake Region Arts Council. (See Highlight)

### Education Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Discussed child care funding for college students and budget requests from Moorhead State University and Moorhead Technical College.

### Health & Human Services Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Discussed hospital and clinic services available in Moorhead and surrounding areas.

### State Departments Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Detroit Lakes)

- Toured Buffalo River State Park and Detroit Lakes Fish Hatchery; saw a videotape of proposed 1990 bonding projects in the area; and heard a presentation from Merlyn Wesloh, Department of Natural Resources regional administrator.

### Computers & Telecommunications Subcommittee

#### Joint meeting with Education Finance Division/Education

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead)

- Discussed school districts' use of computers for data reporting.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead)

- Discussed local economic development strategies.

### Community Stabilization & Development Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Discussed the CANDO program and community stabilization needs.

### International Trade & Technology Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Heard a presentation from the Greater Minnesota Corporation.

### Rural Resource Development Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Heard an overview of a regional urban design team project and toured river area development.

## EDUCATION

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Barnesville)

- Reviewed educational cooperative efforts in Northwest Minnesota school districts and held a dialogue with area high school students regarding education issues facing the Legislature.

### Education Finance Division

Tuesday, Nov. 14 (Roseau)

- Discussed local building needs.

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Lancaster)

- Discussed problems of small, sparsely populated school districts.

### Joint meeting with Computers & Telecommunications Subcommittee/Appropriations

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead)

- Discussed school districts' use of computers for data reporting.

### Higher Education Division

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead)

- Discussed the Tri-College cooperation which includes Concordia College, Moorhead State University, and North Dakota State University. (See Highlight)

## ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

Wednesday, Nov. 15

(Moorhead: 9:30 a.m.)

- Discussed solid waste reduction and recycling, local water management plans, and environmental education.

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead: 2 p.m.)

- Toured the Trash Depot, a recycling center in Moorhead.

## FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & HOUSING

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Discussed mortgage banking with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the Federal Department of Housing and Redevelopment (HUD), and the Office of the Minnesota Chair in Real Estate.

## GENERAL LEGISLATION, VETERANS AFFAIRS & GAMING

Friday, Nov. 17 (Moorhead)

- Heard an overview on pari-mutuel racing and testimony on a new law that makes the State of Minnesota the supplier of lawful gambling equipment. (See Highlight)

### Elections Division

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)

- Discussed and heard testimony on the Municipal Election Day bill. (See Highlight)

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Friday, Nov. 17 (Moorhead)

- Discussed elements of creating a modern State Board of Medical Examiners. (See Highlight)

### Community Action Legislative Task Force

Tuesday, Nov. 14 (Crookston)

- Discussed community action programs.

### Rural Emergency Task Force

Friday, Nov. 17 (Moorhead)

- Discussed problems with providing rural emergency services. (See Highlight)

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### INSURANCE

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)  
• Discussed the Canadian health care/insurance system.

### JUDICIARY

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Moorhead)  
• Heard testimony from the legal community and citizens regarding marriage dissolution issues.

### LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)  
• Discussed Minnesota's workers' compensation system. (See Highlight)

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT & METROPOLITAN AFFAIRS

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)  
• Heard an overview and testimony regarding *Minnesota Statutes* Chapter 375A: Optional forms of county government.

### TAXES

Thursday, Nov. 16 (Moorhead)  
• Toured tax increment districts.

### TRANSPORTATION

Tuesday, Nov. 14 (Detroit Lakes)  
• Discussed HF1569 (A. Johnson, DFL-Spring Lake Park) that would change the County State Aid Screening Board and the fund distribution formula.

Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Hawley)  
• Toured township roads and bridges in the Hawley area.



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