

How Hockey Became Minnesota's State Sport



Sen. Gen Olson first introduced a bill to make ice hockey the state sport on May 18, 2007. ([SF2313](#)) In 2008, avid 6th graders came to the Capitol to testify. This photo is by David Oakes, the Senate Photographer.

"Eleven-year-old Hannah Erhesmann, a sixth grader at Minnetonka East Middle School, explains to members of the State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee, Wed., Mar. 5, why ice hockey should be designated the state sport." (From the March 7, 2008, [Senate Briefly](#))

On March 26, 2008, Sen. Olson offered the language as an amendment to [SF3001](#) in the E-12 Education Budget Division. "While the proposal has advanced to the floor in the Senate, the other body did not advance any bills designating official state symbols, Olson said." ([Senate Briefly](#), March 28, 2008) It was carried into the omnibus education policy bill that was [vetoed](#) by Governor Pawlenty on May 13.

Later Sen. Olson offered an amendment to add the provision to the State Government Finance bill (HF3493). From the [Senate Floor Session Notes](#), May 1, 2008: "Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrista) offered an amendment designating ice hockey as the state sport. Olson said she was wary of carrying a bill creating another state symbol, especially a state sport. But we are an active state with a tradition of connection to sports, she said, and ice hockey has a unique relationship to Minnesota. Minnesota is the home of the Hockey Hall of Fame and Sports Illustrated magazine's "Hockeytown, USA," Olson said, and is widely regarded as a state where hockey is grown from the ground up, beginning with vibrant youth leagues. The amendment was adopted."

The Senate amendment was taken out during the conference committee process, and did not pass.

Later last year, the [House reported on the State Fair Survey](#) question about whether ice hockey should be designated as the state sport. "35.2 percent of polltakers said ice hockey should be designated the state sport, 6.9 percent more than fishing. But many fairgoers commented that the Legislature should not waste time on such "trivial" matters. More than 600 people did not vote on the question."

This year, the provision was added to [SF2081](#), the Economic Development and Housing Budget Division's omnibus budget bill, in the Senate Finance Committee on April 20, 2009. (It was not offered as a separate bill in the Senate or House.) From the April 24 [Senate E-Briefly](#), "Two additional amendments were offered, one appropriating an additional \$1.6 million to the film board and another designating hockey as the official state sport. The amendments were adopted by the committee." Sen. Wiger offered the amendment, noting that it had been passed twice by the Senate in 2008. The amendment was discussed at approximately one hour and 47 minutes into the hearing. ([MP3](#)). There was not a corresponding provision in the House bill as the

conference committee began. The final version of the bill, repassed by the House on May 4 and the Senate on May 5, included the provision. Governor Pawlenty vetoed the bill on May 7. The bill was revised, became [HF2088](#), with the state sport provision included. Governor Pawlenty vetoed some provisions in the law, but [Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 78](#) as passed included "Ice hockey is adopted as the official sport of the state of Minnesota."

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