



CONNECTING & INNOVATING  
SINCE 1913

March 27, 2017

Representative Sarah Anderson  
Chair, House State Government Finance Committee  
583 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Representative Anderson:

The League of Minnesota Cities has two issues to bring to the committee's attention related to the omnibus State Government Finance budget bill.

First, the League opposes the elimination of the Legislative Water Commission contained in Article 2, Section 62, subd. 3 of the DE amendment to H.F. 691. This action completely eliminates the Legislative Water Commission. We would respectfully request that the Legislative Water Commission not be abolished.

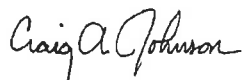
As an example of its usefulness, the commission held an interim discussion on stormwater reuse, a state-identified priority for reducing groundwater use and stormwater discharge volume. As a result of that hearing, city officials were able to explain where the Department of Natural Resources permit system was not working. Legislative members of the LWC ended up drafting bipartisan legislation, H.F. 2028 (Rep. Fischer) and S.F. 1731 (Sen. Ruud), to correct the identified problems and remove a barrier to cities and businesses using stormwater for irrigation. That language is now found in both the House and Senate omnibus Environment and Natural Resources budget bills. The speed of legislative response on this important and complicated issue was only possible because of the information members, the department, and stakeholders had from that interim hearing.

The state of Minnesota has numerous water-related issues that are all extremely complex, very expensive, and often controversial. The responsibilities and costs cities face around water issues and the importance of water to public health, public safety, the environment, and the economy make this group an important venue for a more detailed and thorough bi-cameral discussion of water policy than can normally occur in the legislative process. City engineers, water and wastewater staff, and public works directors have all been regular attendees and presenters to that group, providing a level of technical input the legislative process doesn't typically have the ability to take. The Legislative Water Commission plays an important role in improving the level of coordination, dialogue, and understanding around water.

Second, the League supports funding for a state match to cover the costs of replacing aging mandated election equipment, a problem compounded by the lack of dedicated federal funding. H.F. 1697 (Rep. O'Driscoll) would have provided \$14 million, one half of the needed amount. The state is an essential partner in keeping Minnesota elections accurate and efficient. We would ask that you consider including funding for these needs as the budget negotiations continue.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to continue working with you as this budget progresses to address these important issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Craig A. Johnson".

Craig A. Johnson  
Intergovernmental Relations