

HF 4221 (Nelson, M) Permitting Hennepin County to pay reasonable allowances for persons serving on advisory boards

In 1967 the legislature enacted Minnesota Statutes, Section 375.47 which allowed counties throughout Minnesota to set a reasonable allowance for expenses or a per diem for persons serving on a county advisory board.

However, that 1967 law exempted counties containing a city of the first class from paying allowances. That meant Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis County were prohibited from paying allowances. In 1978 Ramsey County was exempted from the exception. In 2000, St. Louis County received an exemption from this exception, thereby leaving Hennepin County as the only county in the state that cannot pay allowances or per diem for citizens who serve on advisory boards or commissions.

HF 4221 seeks to remove this exception for Hennepin County thereby allowing Hennepin County, like all other 86 counties in the state to, by resolution, set reasonable allowances or per diem allowances to be paid to members of boards or agencies authorized by statute.

Hennepin County has a relatively small number of boards and advisory commissions where citizens serve without any remuneration. Hennepin County has found that this prohibition in state law acts as a barrier to its recruitment of a number of people whose time and talents could advise the county on important issues.

The rationale for the 1967 law has long since passed. All other 86 counties are allowed to compensate members of advisory boards and commissions and Hennepin County should be able to do the same. County Commissioner Angela Conley has been particularly proactive on this matter and she is here today to testify on the bill.