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Hennepin County



Minnesota House of Representatives

COMMITTEES:
LEAD HOUSING, JOB GROWTH & ENERGY AFFORDABILITY
AGRICULTURE FINANCE
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICY AND FINANCE

Rep. Karen Clark's 2017 Legislative Summary Letter

July 2017

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2017 regular and first special sessions are now over. **First, I want to invite you to join Rep. Susan Allen and me for a Capitol Reception on Saturday, July 22, 2017 from 10:00am-12:00 pm in the House Chamber, second floor of the Capitol Building.** You'll have a chance to ask *us* questions about the issues you care about and *tour* the fully restored Capitol building, which is now complete.

With this year's initial legislative activity concluded, I want to share some of the accomplishments and disappointments of the 2017 legislative session.

As you may know, after a week-long special session Governor Dayton signed into law all of the major budget and tax bills written by Republican legislators this year. So although he fought their harmful policy and budget cuts, he signed the budget bills with great reservations. He also line-item vetoed funding for the Legislature! He did that to try to force better cooperation from Republican leadership for three big concerns: 1) denying driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, 2) providing irresponsibly large tax cuts for big tobacco and for a few hundred of the wealthiest Minnesotans, and 3) changes to teacher licensure that will weaken our schools. The Republican leaders who control the legislature since the last election failed to protect the state's long-term fiscal health by enacting numerous giveaways to special interests. The constitutionality of whether or not the Governor could veto our legislative funding is now being taken up in state court.

While I'm pleased to report some small victories for our community, I must say this session contained many missed opportunities, misplaced priorities and modest accomplishments given the state's projected \$1.65 billion surplus as we started the year.

There are a few accomplishments I am proud to share. I have continued to focus on creating and maintaining good paying jobs, improving Minnesota's economic health, and enhancing our state's infrastructure, as well as our urban quality of life. I was pleased that on a bipartisan basis we were able to enact a \$988 million capital investment bonding bill that will help complete many important building projects in our community. Here are some of the ways the City of Minneapolis will benefit from this public investment:

- Statewide Affordable Housing and Homeless Infrastructure (MHFA) - \$77 million
- Minneapolis 10th Avenue Bridge - \$31.875 million
- I-35 W - Lake Street Transit Access - \$25.0 million
- Minneapolis Veterans Home Truss Bridge - \$7.851 million
- Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Cemetery Fence - \$1.029 million
- The Family Partnership - \$1.6 million
- The People's Center - \$2.2 million
- Minneapolis Norway House - \$5 million

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- Hennepin Center for the Arts - \$3.0 million
- Somali American Museum - \$400,000 (passed in the Legacy Bill)
- South Minneapolis Workforce Center Asset Preservation - \$1.342 million
- U of M - Health Sciences Education Facility (Medical School) - \$66.667 million

Other accomplishments of note: an increase in the per pupil school funding formula of 2% each of the next two years; an expansion of the **Working Family Credit**; improvements to the **Child and Dependent Care Credit**; funding for programs to serve victims of sex trafficking; and a first of its kind **\$500,000 investment in an urban agriculture program** which I worked with Rep. Rod Hamilton to pass. This bill will provide competitive grants to urban farmers statewide with a priority for low-income communities of color and Native American Indian communities, which will hopefully lead to more quality jobs and increased access to healthy food. Also, my bill for funding to help create an **indoor urban farm and entrepreneurial center at the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute** was included in the final Jobs Bill. We also funded my bill for **Dakota/Ojibwe Language Immersion Early Childhood Programs** in the Legacy Bill.

Despite these accomplishments, the legislature failed to enact a comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan with ongoing, dedicated funding, and instead raided the state's general fund to pay for a **very** limited number of transportation initiatives. Our fight to stop bus service cuts was a victory for Governor Dayton and transit users. However, Hennepin County is now responsible for 100% of new light rail operating costs once projects are complete. Normally, the state pays 50% of costs.

Other shortcomings this year, include: 1) a \$1.2 million increase in the estate tax exemption for the financially well-to-do; business property tax cuts, but no corresponding direct property tax relief for homeowners and renters; 2) shortchanging our higher education campuses for students who now face tuition increases; and 3) failing to enact internet privacy protections to prohibit the selling of your personal data without your permission.

One failure of special concern for me and many families in our district is the Legislature's continued failure on reducing the amount of **toxic lead** in our environment. This year I and several other DFL legislators had bills to reduce lead in homes, schools, water and other parts of the environment where kids can come in contact. **None of our bills even received a hearing in Republican-chaired committees.** Tragically, every year there are 700 Minnesota kids that suffer permanent neurological damage from toxic lead. My bill would have provided a tax credit for lead abatement in homes and **required** landlords to give renters the right to know about toxic lead in their homes.

In short, this year moneyed special interests like big tobacco, insurance companies, and corporate enterprises did well, and hardworking Minnesotans less so. However, Minnesota's budget is balanced in the short-term, and unlike past years a government shutdown was avoided.

For my part, I want to assure you that as the debate about legislative funding continues in the courts my priorities are unwavering. I am committed to: standing against hateful policies that would marginalize immigrant families in our state; building a world class E-12 education system for all kids; improving access to affordable housing and healthcare; making college more affordable and reducing student debt; fostering an economy conducive to job creation; investing in our transit infrastructure; protecting our state's environment and natural resources; improving workplace conditions for employees; and ensuring that Minnesota's budget practices are structurally sound and fiscally prudent.

I am particularly proud of the people in our District 62A who called, wrote, **came to meet with me at the State Office Building or marched together out in the community. I was especially pleased by the broad and consistent efforts many put forward to draft, amend, and protest harmful anti-protester bills, anti-worker "preemption" legislation, and irresponsible "shoot first" gun laws.** Together, we were able to **successfully** put pressure on lawmakers and the Governor to stop these bills or veto them.

Thank you for taking time to review this information about the work of the 2017 Legislature. I want to take this opportunity to let you know that while I share your disappointments with the 2017 session, I continue to be focused on going forward with your continued support and activism. It is truly an honor and a privilege to represent and serve you in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Please feel free to contact me at either my office [\(651\) 296-0194](tel:6512960194) or my personal cell-phone [\(612\) 237-7156](tel:6122377156) to meet or talk further.

Sincerely,

Karen Clark
Karen Clark
State Representative

PS: Don't forget to apply for your **property tax and family tax credits** if you have not done so by **August 15, 2017**.
For information on **Renter's Credit**: 651-296-3781 **Homestead Credit**: 651-296-3781
Working Family Credit: 651-297-3724 or 1-800-657-3989 **Childcare Tax Credit**: 651-296-3781 or 1-800-652-9094



Clockwise from top left: On the last night of legislative session, I joined protesters from our community demanding that undocumented Minnesotans have access to drivers licenses; Margarita Ortega, Little Earth resident, testified on a neighborhood crime bill I authored and passed; Sam Olbekson and Mary LaGarde testified on the bonding legislation we passed for the Minneapolis American Indian Center design and planning.





Top: Teacher Hope Flanagan and a young student joined me to testify on the Ojibwe/Dakota early childhood language immersion funding we passed in the Legacy Bill.

Middle: Testifiers from our neighborhoods spoke on behalf of the first-of-its-kind urban agriculture bill I authored and passed.

Bottom: Mohamed Farah Ali of Community Priority One joined me to help present my bill for job creation investments in the Somali Community.

