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State Representative **Loren Solberg**

2005 Legislative Update

Earlier this month, the Legislature completed its work on the state budget for 2006-2007. Although much of the focus recently has been on the special session and the difficult negotiations, I hope the residents of our area will also take time to focus on what's really important - the final outcome.

Education

Due to our insistence on adequate funding for education, this bill makes the most significant investment in our students and classrooms in two decades, increasing the funding by \$800 million. Public schools will receive a 4 percent increase in the base per pupil funding formula in each of the next two years, as well as additional resources. Schools in our area will receive the following amounts in additional funding:

Grand Rapids - \$3,278,586
Aitkin - \$1,174,723
McGregor - \$604,361
Nashwauk-Keewatin - \$601,482
Deer River - \$1,036,785
Greenway of Coleraine - \$1,175,202
Hill City - \$361,442

This new funding will do a lot to end the downward spiral of cuts to our classrooms, teacher layoffs and increasing class sizes.

MinnesotaCare

The final Health & Human Services bill protects the health insurance of over 30,000 working Minnesotans whose coverage was threatened. It also eliminates the \$5,000 benefit cap, allowing those people with serious illnesses or injuries to get the medical treatment they need.

Local Government Aid

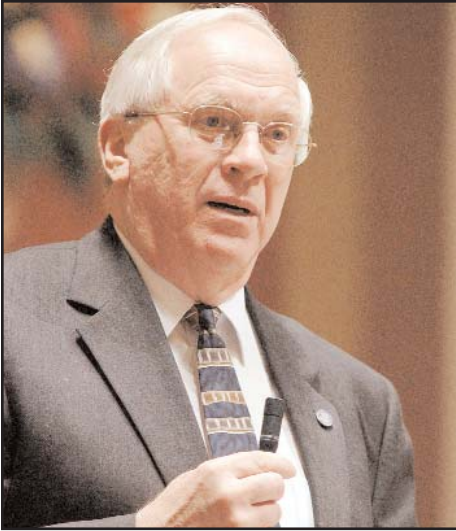
We fought hard to restore at least a portion of the cuts to local government aid (LGA) made during the last budget. Because of this, our towns and cities will receive additional aid next year, money that can offer property tax relief by covering services such as police and fire protection, road maintenance and parks.

Grand Rapids - \$261,357
Aitkin - \$12,660
McGregor - \$16,760
McGrath - \$372
Hill City - \$11,555
Finlayson - \$7,094
Tamarack - \$354
Deer River - \$23,468
Palisade - \$1,050
Cohasset - \$15,288

Blandin Paper Company

A few weeks back, the House and Senate passed an excellent transportation bill. Included in this bill was a pro-

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posal that Senator Tom Saxhaug and I worked on that would allow Blandin Co. to haul specially designed, heavier trucks with additional axles, on U. S. Route 2 between Grand Rapids and Duluth.

The Governor chose to veto this bipartisan bill. However, we were very fortunate to get this proposal included in the Jobs Bill, which passed and was signed into law by the Governor.

This is important legislation for our area, as it will enable Blandin to compete in the paper market on a

global scale, helping to protect the business of one of the major employers in Northern Minnesota.

Historical Society funding

The Jobs and Economic Development Bill includes a 6% increase for the Historical Society, restoring a portion of the 16% cut of two years ago.

The bill also included \$1.4 million in operations funding for historical sites such as the Forest History Center and the Kelly Farm.

ATV Legislation

Provisions regarding the use of ATV's were included in the Agriculture/Environmental Bill. The bill allows state land lying north of State Hwy. 2 to maintain its "managed" status for ATV use. This means that trails on state land are open for ATV use unless posted closed. This does not include wetlands.

Iron Range School Bonds

A new law gives the

Commissioner of the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (IRRRB) the ability to issue \$15 million of revenue bonds in grants to iron range school districts for health, safety and maintenance improvements. This will allow the Aitkin, Grand Rapids and Coleraine School Districts to receive \$600,000 each for capital improvements to their buildings.

Children's Museum

We were also able to secure a \$100,000 grant for the Children's Museum in Grand Rapids.

Overall, I am pleased with the results of the 2005 session. As difficult as the final weeks were, I believe that we finished with a strong budget that will be good for our district and our state.

I am honored to represent all the constituents of District 3B. I appreciate all of the support and feedback you have given me and look forward to visiting with you over the summer months.

2005 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Almost \$32 million worth of work projects for our district from the bonding bill, creating new jobs and economic growth
- Largest K-12 funding in over two decades, helping to prevent further cuts and lay-offs in our schools
- No changes to MinnesotaCare eligibility, preventing 30,000 working Minnesotans from losing their health care coverage
- First cost of living adjustment for nursing home workers in three years
- \$48 million designated for property tax relief
- First increase in the minimum wage in 8 years
- Ethanol level in gasoline will be doubled by 2012
- Tougher penalties for the worst sex offenders
- Restricted sale of over-the-counter medicines that are used to make methamphetamines
- Tougher penalties for meth manufacturers and users
- Renters credit protected