

SESSION WEEKLY

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TAXES: PROGRESSIVE, REGRESSIVE

BUY MINNESOTA BONDS

BUDGETS NOW ON THE TABLE

KEEPING MINNESOTA SAFE

HF1705 - HF1959

SESSION WEEKLY

Session Weekly is a nonpartisan publication of Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services. During the 2009-2010 Legislative Session, each issue reports House action between Thursdays of each week, lists bill introductions and provides other information. No fee.

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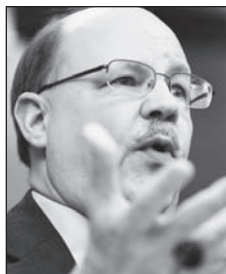
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On the cover: Minnesota Historical Society conservation lab staff, *from top*, Sherelyn Ogden, Tom Brown and Ann Frisina, began to untie the staff from the 13th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment's flag as it lay March 16 in the Rotunda. Several flags were removed from the Rotunda flag cases for restoration.

— Photo by: Tom Olmscheid



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Paul Marquart, chairman of the House Property and Local Sales Tax Division, and Rep. Ann Lenczewski, chairwoman of the House Taxes Committee, study one of the “Green Acres” proposals that was heard March 17 during a joint hearing of the two bodies.

Making the state more progressive

Tax chairs take a stab at reform

By SONJA HEGMAN

If you went to the grocery store, would it make sense to pay a sales tax based on your ability to afford it? Maybe, maybe not, but that’s exactly what it would take to make the state’s sales tax more progressive.

Minnesota’s tax system is often dubbed progressive. This means the more money you make, the more you pay in tax. But according to the House Taxes Committee chairwoman, the state has only two progressive taxes: income and estate.

“Every other tax is regressive. Our whole net state tax system is slightly regressive,” said Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington).

Regressive means that the poorer a person is the bigger tax burden he or she pays relative to his or her situation. The gas tax is another example of a regressive tax. Like the sales tax, Lenczewski said it is not based on a person’s ability to pay it. “It’s based per gallon as an

excise tax. So, if the tax is a dime a gallon, on 10 gallons a person would pay \$1 in tax. That doesn’t matter if the price is \$2 or \$6 a gallon, she said.

“People didn’t think last year’s gas tax was a good idea because prices were so high, but the price (per gallon) had nothing to do with it,” Lenczewski said. “It’s still the exact same level of tax.”

Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague), lead Republican on the House Taxes Committee, agreed that the gas tax is regressive, but still didn’t see the logic in passing an increase to the tax last year. She finds the focus on regressivity this session interesting because

of the four taxes that have been passed over the last four years — gas, motor vehicle sales, transit sales and the constitutional amendment sales for environment and the arts — every one of them is a regressive tax.

“Folks are forgetting that all these taxes that have passed are more regressive and hit the lowest income folks the hardest,” she said. “If we want to make our tax system more progressive, what we ought to do is lower the regressive taxes that we have.”

Studying the consequences

This focus on regressivity is tied, in part, to the 2009 Minnesota Tax Incidence Study released earlier this month. Based on 2006 figures, the study shows that between 2004 and 2006, the state’s overall tax system became much more regressive. Meaning, among other things, that income distribution has grown more unequal.

“When you look at something like the tax

First Reading continued on page 4

incidence study, people often forget that we have one of the most progressive tax systems in the country,” Brod said. “So when we talk about regressivity, we’re talking about relative regressivity. Compared to other states, we do quite well in terms of being progressive.”

When people think of the income tax being so progressive, Lenczewski said they’re actually thinking of the federal income tax, which is hyper-progressive compared to the state’s.

She added that the word “progressive” gets attached to Democrats a lot. “That’s not the way to think about it. It’s not like Republicans like it to be regressive and Democrats like to be progressive. Both parties want a progressive system. Everyone gets that you want a progressive tax system, it’s just hard to get people to get there.”

Lenczewski said one way to look at progressive tax is that people who want it want it based on ability to pay. Often people

Understanding the Terms

Progressive versus regressive taxes

- Minnesota’s tax system is often dubbed progressive. This means the more money you make, the more you pay in tax.
- Regressive means that the poorer a person is, the bigger tax burden he or she pays relative to his or her situation.

think a flat tax would be fair, but 10 percent, for example, means something different to a college student who really has no income than to a millionaire.

“Flat taxes aren’t fair; they’re perfectly proportional, but they aren’t fair,” she said. The state’s income tax is slightly based on ability to pay with the lowest income earners being taxed 5.35 percent, middle income is taxed at 7.05 percent and the richest taxed at 7.85 percent.

“It kind of becomes a philosophical thing, but everyone can kind of get to the fact that regressive is not good.”

The reform proposal

With a projected \$4.6 billion deficit looming, Lenczewski sees an opportunity for some tax reform.

She and Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth) have come up with a proposal that would reform the state’s tax system by eliminating dozens of tax breaks while cutting income taxes for those of meager means.

While the plan is revenue neutral, Lenczewski has hinted that scenario could change with a property tax proposal expected before month’s end from Marquart.

“This is going to be a rough trip,” she said. “And we need an oil change.”

Lenczewski’s part of the plan, HF1782, proposes the most significant individual income and corporate franchise tax reform in more than 20 years, she said. This, in turn, would make the system more progressive. The bill is scheduled to be heard March 23 by the House Taxes Committee.

Tax breaks that would be eliminated include individual income tax benefits for JOBZ programs, the charitable contribution deduction and a low-income motor fuels credit.

“We should not be using the tax code to bury this stuff,” Lenczewski said. The plan would make Minnesota’s tax system fairer and easier to understand.

Rep. Kurt Zellers’ (R-Maple Grove) immediate reaction to the bill was that eliminating tax credits could hinder job growth.

“I just don’t see how, in a tough economic time, why that could be a good idea,” he said.

Brod added that the best way to jump-start the economy is to lessen the burden on family and business.

“I get a little frustrated when I hear people say, ‘Well in order to get out of here we’ve got to do X, Y, or Z.’ When I look at that I say, ‘OK, well, yes, we’re going to get out of here, and, yes, we’re required to get out of here, but if we only just get out of here and don’t strategically position ourselves to recover economically, we will have missed an opportunity and not done our job.’ It’s setting up a tax system that ensures the economy moves forward,” Brod said.

The proposal would lower the tax rates for the two lowest income categories, while creating a new credit that would benefit all taxpayers on the mortgage, charitable contributions and family front.

“The income tax system is too complicated, and there now seems to be bipartisan agreement that major reform is necessary,” said House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) in a press release. “Republicans proposed reducing personal income tax rates in 2007 when the government had a surplus, so we are glad to have Rep. Lenczewski join us in saying Minnesotans need relief when it comes to income taxes.”

But he questioned Democrats credibility when it comes to their professed desire to make the tax system more progressive.

Lenczewski said the bill is modeled after President Reagan’s overhaul of the federal tax code in the 1980s, when several tax breaks were thrown out. She added that over the years these breaks have crept back in. “It’s time to sweep the barn.”



PHOTO BY TOM OLSCHIED

Paul Wilson, director of tax research at the Department of Revenue, presents the 2009 Minnesota Tax Incidence Study, to the House Taxes Committee March 11.

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Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees and other House activities held March-12-19. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; Ch-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House or the bill language signed by the governor.

AGRICULTURE

Studying ethanol industry's impact

An analysis of the effects of the state's ethanol industry is called for under a bill that, over the years, has become known as the "Ag Special." It lays out legislative priorities and funding for agriculture and bioenergy research, and extension activities at the University of Minnesota.

This year's bill, HF1446, sponsored by Rep. Andy Welti (DFL-Plainview), would appropriate \$105 million during the 2010-2011 biennium for an analysis of the state's ethanol industry, such as:

- water use trends as compared to other industries;
- the carbon balance of ethanol production;
- the effect of ethanol blending requirements on transportation fuel prices; and
- the economic impact of ethanol production on employment, economic output, and state and local tax revenues.

"We are not prescribing what their outcome should be," Welti told the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division March 18. He said the university's analysis would address concerns raised about the environmental byproducts of ethanol production. The bill was approved by the division, and now moves to the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division. It has no Senate companion.

Also, under the bill is a requirement for the university to convene agricultural advisory groups to develop effective ways of transferring best-practices information to producers. Further, it asks for research efforts regarding:

- vegetable crops;
- soil, ground and surface water conservation practices and contaminant reduction;
- breeding and development of turf seed and other biomass resources;
- discovering and developing plant varieties that use nutrients more efficiently;

TASTE TESTERS



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba, lower right, says grace before taking part in a taste test of meat products given to the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division March 18 as part of a budget discussion and presentation by the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute.

- consumer food safety education and outreach; and
- utilizing plant and livestock cells to treat and cure human diseases.

Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) successfully amended the bill to include programs to meet the research and outreach needs of sustainable and organic livestock and crop farmers.

— L. SCHUTZ

BONDING

'Minnesota First' bonds

Minnesotans could invest in state general obligation bonds in denominations as small as \$500, under a proposal approved by a House division.

HF796, sponsored by Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter), would establish a Minnesota

First bond program that would allow Minnesota Management and Budget to issue a portion of state general obligation bonds to individual investors.

The bill would require MMB to administer the program and develop a marketing plan for the bonds, and place a yet-to-be-determined limit on the percentage of state bonds that could be sold under the program.

Morrow said the idea for the bill came from contractors and construction companies who want to invest in state bonds. He said MMB officials have told him that they support the idea and that brokers and dealers see it as another investment option they would like to have.

The House State Government Finance Division approved the bill March 18 and referred it to the House Capital Investment Finance Division. Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) sponsors the companion, SF1016, which awaits action by the Senate State Government Budget Division.

— N. BUSSE

New ice arena for St. Paul?

St. Paul city officials want to build a new ice arena downtown, and they think they've identified a funding source: \$33 million the city owes to the state.

Sponsored by Rep. Tim Mahoney (DFL-St. Paul), HF1263 would forgive the bulk of a \$48 million loan St. Paul took out in 1998 to help build the Xcel Energy Center. The city would divert the money to finance the Pond — a proposed 120,000-square foot, three-level ice arena across the street from the Xcel.

Mayor Chris Coleman said St. Paul is looking to expand its downtown event district, which has become a regional attraction. He said the Pond project would be good for the state's economy as well as the city.

"It creates jobs, it's shovel ready, and it's good for our economic future," Coleman said.

Mahoney said the request is fair, given the unusual arrangement that was made to pay for the Xcel. He said that while the state often provides direct aid for other cities' projects in the form of bonding dollars, it made St. Paul take out a loan instead.

"There's always a need for more ice time in the state of hockey," Mahoney added.

While supporters see the project as a stimulus, Rep. Keith Downey (R-Edina) characterized it as a "bailout package."

"The city of St. Paul should honor their loan. It was a good deal. No one forced them to come into it in the first place," Downey said. He suggested the city submit a bonding request to the Legislature, if it is serious about funding the Pond.

The House Higher Education and Workforce

Development Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over March 12 for possible inclusion in its omnibus finance bill.

Sen. Richard Cohen (DFL-St. Paul) sponsors the companion, SF1115, which awaits action by the Senate Economic Development and Housing Budget Division.

— N. BUSSE

BUDGET

Pawlenty's budget revised

Prefacing his revised 2010-2011 biennial budget as containing "some good news," Gov. Tim Pawlenty laid out changes reflecting more than a \$1 billion decrease in revenue and expenditures from his January proposal.

Unveiled March 17, the budget change is in response to the state's February Forecast that foretells of a more than \$6 billion deficit for the upcoming biennium. But it also takes into account \$2.6 billion in one-time federal stimulus funds the state expects to receive.

The governor's spending plan comes in at \$32.4 billion over the biennium, which begins July 1, 2009. It reflects a decrease from the \$33.9 billion in General Fund expenditures in the current budget.

His new budget would:

- increase by \$27 million K-12 education funding beyond what was previously proposed;
- restore \$304 million in cuts he had proposed to higher education;
- exempt from state taxes up to \$2,400 in unemployment insurance benefits per individual;
- provide an additional \$10 million for operation of state courts;
- move short-term offenders from county facilities to state prisons;
- provide more than \$10 million for a contingency fund to ensure state match for federal stimulus fund grants; and
- reconfigure the General Assistance Medical Care program, eliminating hospital and emergency care coverage.

Counties would see an \$8 million benefit from moving short-term offenders convicted of misdemeanors or gross misdemeanors to state prisons, Pawlenty said. The option of being incarcerated at a local facility versus a state prison has become a plea-bargain ploy, he said, resulting in an increased population at county jails.

His proposal to remove hospital and emergency care coverage for those on GAMC is intended to help redirect patients to clinics and boost preventive care. He would establish a fund for hospitals could tap to cover this care, when needed.

The governor's revised budget still relies on no new taxes, but retains use of one-time funds gained through the sale of "tobacco appropriation bonds," that would essentially bond for half of 20 years' worth of future revenues from the state's decade-old tobacco settlement. Previously proposed accounting shifts and cuts to local government aid are still part of the plan.

— L. SCHUTZ

CRIME

Abuse arrest time expansion

Police could have double the time to arrest someone without a warrant who is believed to have committed domestic abuse.

Sponsored by Rep. Paul Rosenthal (DFL-Edina), HF1273 would increase the maximum time from 12 to 24 hours.

Approved March 13 by the House Crime Victims/Criminal Records Division, it was sent to the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee. A companion, SF1079, sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"One of the things we know is that the time following the assault is often the most dangerous time for a victim of a domestic assault, especially if the defendant realizes the victim called police. The defendant may try and come back and re-assault the victim," said Assistant Minneapolis City Attorney Michelle Jacobson.

Supporters say that abusers are becoming more aware of the 12-hour limit, and will oftentimes hide to avoid an arrest. Currently, officers must seek a complaint warrant from a prosecutor once the time is expired.

"This would keep victims of domestic violence safer," Jacobson said.

— M. COOK

Misusing state funds

The fact that misusing taxpayer dollars is not a crime may come as a surprise to many. Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) certainly found it surprising.

Following a rash of recent scandals involving fraud and financial mismanagement at state agencies, Winkler wondered why the state employees involved were being fired but not prosecuted. It turns out that knowingly misappropriating state money is not actually a crime.

That would change under the provisions of HF7. Sponsored by Winkler, the bill would specify that anyone who intentionally misuses state funds is guilty of a gross misdemeanor, and ask the appropriate authorities to prosecute violators.

The House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee approved the bill March 18 and referred it to the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee.

Currently, misappropriating state money is grounds for dismissal of a state employee. In cases where a criminal investigation is warranted, county attorneys can file charges; however, only cases that involve a specific offense, such as fraud, can be prosecuted.

"The basic thrust of the bill is simply to clarify that misspending public funds ... actually constitutes a crime," Winkler said.

The bill also contains a provision asking Minnesota Management and Budget to establish a best practices policy for investigating employee misconduct. Winkler said the policy is necessary to ensure that investigations of employee misconduct do not compromise potential criminal prosecutions.

Some committee members expressed concern that the bill's language applied only to executive branch agencies. Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) suggested including employees of the Legislature and the court system in the bill.

A companion, SF107, sponsored by Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), was held over March 9 by the Senate State Government Budget Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— N. BUSSE

No firearm for you

State statute prohibits a person convicted of one of approximately three-dozen felonious crimes from owning a firearm.

The state's "crime of violence" list includes felonious murder, criminal sexual conduct, certain manslaughter or assaults, arson, simple robbery and burglary.

Under current law, a person convicted of such violent crimes may not possess a firearm, else they could get up to 15 years behind bars.

Rep. John Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) would like to add felony domestic assault and assault by strangulation to the group.

Sponsored by Lesch, HF1199 was approved March 13 by the House Crime Victims/Criminal Records Division, and sent to the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee. A companion, SF994, sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"As we see those in relation to the other crimes of violence listed, they're not nearly as clear," Tom Adkins, director of Washington County Community Corrections, who was speaking on behalf of the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties.

"Right now, we deal with who can possess a firearm issues that are both state as well as federal. Those laws are complicated, and this would simplify that language and make it much clearer for us as we proceed."

— M. COOK

Updating criminal sexual misconduct

A person acting as a lookout or blocking an exit during a gang rape can now be charged with the most severe crime of the group.

Supporters of a bill sponsored by Rep. John

Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) would like to see all people charged with the same level offense if force or coercion is used.

That is just one of many provisions in HF1392. The omnibus sexual conduct technical review bill clarifies existing statutes and addresses technical changes.

"I would be able to charge the actual rapist with only third-degree criminal sexual conduct, which is penetration with force or coercion. I would, however, be able to charge the lookout with first-degree criminal

LIGHT MOMENT



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

George W. Crocker, executive director of North American Water Office, enjoys the sunshine coming through the French-style windows on the second floor of the State Capitol March 18.

sexual conduct because it was an aid or abet situation,” Assistant Scott County Attorney Cory Tennison told the House Crime Victims/Criminal Records Division March 13.

Approved by the division, the bill awaits action by the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee. A companion, SF1186, sponsored by Sen. Mee Moua (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Caroline Palmer, staff attorney with the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, said that 61,000 Minnesotans were harmed by sexual violence in 2005, and its statewide economic impact was in the \$8 billion range.

Other changes proposed in the bill include:

- extending the statute of limitations to the longer of nine years after committing an offense, or three years after reporting to law enforcement for individuals sexually assaulted as a minor;
- restoration of a 36-month presumptive sentence for repeat convictions of first-through fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct within 15 years of a previous offense; and
- adding the intentional deposit of seminal fluid or sperm on a victim or their clothing to the definition of sexual contact for second- and fourth-degree criminal sexual contact. Tennison said the act must be done with sexual or aggressive intent.

“We understand the changes to criminal statute may well result in fiscal impact,” Palmer said. “Still, we believe financial challenges should not prevent us from talking about what the state can do to improve the laws governing criminal sexual conduct.”

— M. COOK

EDUCATION

More measures better than one

Some lawmakers believe assessing student achievement in more ways than proficiency testing could significantly improve student learning and performance in the long term.

Rep. Kathy Brynaert (DFL-Mankato) sponsors HF1441, which would establish, over the next four years, three supplemental indicators of student achievement and growth besides the Adequate Yearly Progress measure required by federal law. She said the proposal complements the current assessment model.

Current annual standards-based testing shows how this year’s third graders perform compared with last year’s third graders. The idea is to promote school accountability for the results.

The bill would add “growth” and “value-added growth” assessments to measure a student’s performance from one year to the next. Proponents say these indicators could help schools identify students who aren’t making reasonable gains in proficiency and those who are growing at higher rates.

A second indicator of student success is course-taking patterns. Research suggests that taking rigorous courses, especially in math, is a better indicator of college preparedness than grade point average, test scores or class rank, according to Kent Pekel, executive director of the University of Minnesota’s College Readiness Consortium.

“In fact, every step you take beyond algebra II in the high school math curricula doubles your chance of earning a B.A.,” Pekel said.

The bill would also authorize the education commissioner to convene a group to identify indicators of student engagement, such as attendance, home support for learning and participation in activities beyond school.

University of Minnesota research has found that addressing student engagement early correlates with truancy prevention, diminished dropout rates and increased persistence, according to Jenni Norlin-Weaver, Edina Public Schools’ director of teaching and learning.

The House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight committee laid the bill over March 17 for possible omnibus bill inclusion. Its companion SF1406, sponsored by Sen. Sandy Rummel (DFL-White Bear Lake), awaits action by the Senate Education Committee.

— K. BERGGREN

Helping homeless afford GED

People who are homeless face plenty of obstacles to stabilizing their lives. Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Mpls) sponsors a bill which would offer them a hand up to help further their education.

HF1324 would allow the education commissioner to waive the fee for the General Equivalency for Diploma test for eligible people who are homeless, including those using emergency shelters. The state currently reimburses testing centers up to \$40 for each test administered, but test costs range from \$50 to \$100 among the 50 centers where it is administered.

To pay the balance “can be extremely cost-prohibitive for people who are experiencing homelessness,” said Matthew Ayers, Heading Home Hennepin project manager. He said about 26 percent of homeless adults in Minnesota do not have a high school diploma or GED, and that between 400 and 800 of those would be eligible and ready to pursue the GED.

Ayers said helping them to further their education “is the best way to ensure they will never again experience homelessness.”

Youthlink Program Director Paul Ramsour said 104 of the 1,400 homeless or “precariously housed” young people served there last year participated in education services. Thirty-seven percent earned the GED, and 62 percent enrolled in postsecondary institutions, many at Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

“This is a very important step for many people,” Hornstein said. “There is a real need for this, and it’s a very cost-effective way for people to take the first step toward self sufficiency. It’s needed and I think you can really make a difference in people’s lives.”

The House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over March 17 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. Its companion, SF1364, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate E-12 Education Budget and Policy Division.

— K. BERGGREN

Home school mandates reduced

Home-schooled students usually score at or above average on national standardized tests, and home-schooling parents are usually very proactive about their children’s education, according to Atheen Johnson, a member of the Minnesota Homeschoolers’ Alliance and mother of a 7-year-old home-schooled daughter and an older daughter who is in a public school.

A bill would recognize that level of engagement by reducing certain reporting and testing mandates.

Some provisions of HF1037, sponsored by Rep. Marsha Swails (DFL-Woodbury), would benefit home-school parents by decreasing their paperwork and school superintendents by decreasing the number of reports that now funnel through their offices.

The state could benefit from a provision that would exclude home schools from nonpublic school services, such as the loan of textbooks and availability of counseling and health services. While nursing and counseling services are rarely needed by home-school students, textbooks are typically purchased by school districts then loaned to nonpublic schools including home schools. The bill would specify the services apply to nonpublic schools with enrollment of more than 15 pupils.

That proposal is “huge sacrifice for our families,” said John Tuma, legislative liaison for the Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators. However, he said it would chop \$1.1 million off the state’s education bill, although the credit cost might be felt elsewhere in the system. Home-school

families could claim an income tax credit for those expenses under Minnesota's education tax credit law, which Tuma said is widely admired in other states.

The bill was approved March 12 by the House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee and sent to the House Finance Committee. Its companion, SF846, sponsored by Sen. Gen Olson (R-Minnetrissa), awaits further action by the Senate E-12 Education Budget and Policy Division.

— K. BERGGREN

ELECTIONS

Absentee voting overhaul

Lessons learned from the U.S. Senate race recount form the basis for a bill that would update Minnesota's absentee voting laws.

HF1351, sponsored by Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley), would overhaul the state's absentee voting process, with the goal of avoiding many of the pitfalls that complicated the recount.

"We've learned a lot, and this bill incorporates things that we've learned," said Secretary of State Mark Ritchie.

Among other changes, absentee ballots would be processed by local ballot boards, similar to the process used for overseas and military ballots. Currently election judges count domestic absentee ballots at polling places on Election Day — something Ritchie said creates a "work nightmare" for election officials.

"One of the real opportunities of this year's recount was to be able to compare and contrast different parts of our voting system," Ritchie said, adding that the ballot boards showed themselves to be a much more accurate and efficient means of counting absentee votes.

The bill would also allow absentee voters to voluntarily provide more personal identifying information, such as driver's license or partial Social Security numbers, on their ballot applications. Beth Fraser, director of governmental affairs for the Office of the Secretary of State, said the change would help determine ballot eligibility in certain circumstances.

In its original form, the bill would have eliminated the current practice of allowing people to vote absentee in person at their local elections office the Saturday prior to an election. Winkler said the change would allow extra time for the ballot boards to process absentee votes; however, Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-North Branch) successfully amended the bill to include provisions to allow absentee voting until noon on that day.

Approved March 17 by the House State and Local Government Operations Reform,

HERE'S LOOKING AT ME



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

Hennepin Technical College President Cecilia Cervantes checks her likeness on the HTC Visual Presenter that welcomes Capitol visitors to the college's exhibit in the Great Hall March 16.

Technology and Elections Committee, the bill goes to the House Finance Committee.

Sen. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport) sponsors the companion, SF1331, which awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Clarifying election laws

A package of mostly technical and clarifying changes to Minnesota's election laws was approved March 17 by a House committee.

HF1011, sponsored by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), contains election provisions recommended by the Office of the Secretary of State to expedite the voting process or otherwise update election statutes.

Among the changes proposed in the bill are:

- clarifying that voter registration drives must submit their registrations 10 business days before an election, rather than the current requirement of 10 calendar days;
- prohibiting the changing of a street name or residential address designation within 45 days of an election;
- clarifying processes by which the secretary of state and county auditors are to update records of voters' addresses in certain circumstances;
- specifying that any changes to a voting precinct resulting from a municipal boundary adjustment do not apply to an election that occurs within 21 days of the change;
- prohibiting voters from taking a photo or video of their ballot on Election Day; and
- prohibiting write-in candidates for office

from distributing labels to voters for purposes of sticking them on the ballot.

A companion, SF991, sponsored by Sen. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), awaits action by the Elections Subcommittee of the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

EMPLOYMENT

Buy uniforms in the US

Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) continues to carry his "Buy American" theme from last legislative session when he sponsored a law requiring flags sold in Minnesota to be made in the United States.

He now sponsors HF1169 that would require public employers to buy uniforms, safety equipment and protective accessories manufactured in the United States. Among those affected, he said, would be school custodians and cafeteria workers, members of school sports teams and city, county, state agency, and public safety employees.

The bill would also require purchasing preference be given to manufacturers who pay an average annual income, including wages and benefits, of at least 150 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four, which amounts to about \$15.90 an hour.

The House Labor and Consumer Protection Division approved the bill March 18 and referred it to the House Commerce and Labor Committee. Its companion, SF1058, sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-

Chisholm), awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

Opponents such as the League of Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota School Boards Association said the bill would create another mandate, and it could be hard to identify acceptable product sources while containing costs.

Proponents made patriotic, economic and human rights arguments.

"Abuses in the (global) apparel industry are well known," Workers United representative Jaye Rykunyk said, citing the use of child labor. In contrast, textile and clothing manufacturers paying union wages, such as Extreme Design in Chisholm, and employers in the southern United States have the capacity to fill new orders for uniforms, safety vests and t-shirts.

"Taking a long view and looking at clothing and uniforms that are made in our country, I think, is the patriotic thing to do," Rykunyk said. Several states have similar laws, including Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio and California.

— K. BERGGREN

Calculating unemployment

The U.S. unemployment rate reached 8.1 percent in February. This is clearly bad news, but what if the real number were nearly twice that much?

In fact, it is, depending on what measures are used to calculate unemployment. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the most comprehensive set of statistical measures available put the actual unemployment rate at 14.8 percent.

HF925, sponsored by House Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm), would ensure that the state's official unemployment estimates are always calculated using the more comprehensive method.

The new calculations would take into account people who are unemployed and no longer actively seeking work because of impediments like transportation issues or a lack of child care. It would also factor in those who are working part-time but who wish to work full-time.

Sertich said the new method would allow the Department of Employment and Economic Development, which produces the state's unemployment estimates, to give lawmakers and others a clearer picture of unemployment in Minnesota.

"This data is already collected. This would just make sure that our own DEED agency can manipulate — in the best sense of the word — manipulate that data and give us a better picture of why Minnesotans are underemployed or unemployed," Sertich said.

The House Bioscience and Workforce

Development Policy and Oversight Division approved the bill March 17 and referred it to the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division.

Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls) sponsors the companion, SF1368, which awaits action by the Senate Business, Industry and Jobs Committee.

— N. BUSSE

ENERGY

Race for energy stimulus dollars

Several bills related to energy efficiency projects are scheduled to be considered March 23 by the House Energy Finance and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

Among the requests for federal stimulus funds are proposals for a biofuel production facility in northeast Minnesota; a solar energy system on a large dairy farm in Bricelyn; and the renovation of a former school building in Kennedy to support geothermal, wind and solar energy for a Go Green Business Center.

More than a dozen bills have been introduced seeking at least partial funding from the federal stimulus funds that are to be allocated to the Office of Energy Security, not the least of which is HF680. Sponsored by Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-North Branch), it creates the framework by which the office would distribute the funds. It also explains the flow of money to existing energy efficiency programs, which will get a significant boost.

Director Bill Glahn told division members March 18 that his department's primary goals in distributing the money are that it creates and retains jobs and that energy savings result.

Strategies to reach those goals within the federal two-year timeframe include:

- \$131.9 million for the weatherization assistance program;
- \$54.2 million for a state energy program that includes: retrofitting public buildings; residential grants and loans through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; renewable energy rebates; workforce retraining; ingenuity grants; commercial/industrial incentives; and the creation of a Minnesota Energy Future Investment Fund;
- \$8.55 million for energy efficiency grants to local governments; and
- an undetermined amount for tax incentives, competitive grants and an Energy Star Appliance Rebate program.

With a majority of the money going to weatherization, Glahn said some significant changes are in store for the program.

Spending limits per household could increase from \$3,000 to \$6,500 and Glahn

estimated that up to 17,000 houses could be weatherized as a result. The federal government stipulates that at least 5 percent of the homes must be inspected. Glahn proposes that 10 percent be inspected, which would require the hiring of 10 state technical monitors and two financial monitors to oversee the program.

— S. HEGARTY

ENVIRONMENT

BWSR board could grow

Representatives from townships and cities may get a voice on the Board of Water and Soil Resources, under to a bill approved by the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee March 12.

HF952, sponsored by Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley), would increase the BWSR board from 12 to 15 members by adding one township officer and two elected city officials to the governor-appointed board. One of the new seats would be filled by a Twin Cities metropolitan area city council member.

Representatives from townships and cities currently attend BWSR meetings but do not have voting privileges. Those who do include county commissioners, soil and water conservation district supervisors, watershed district representatives, commissioners from the departments of agriculture, health and natural resources and the Pollution Control Agency, the director of the University of Minnesota Extension Service and three citizen members.

"This has become an increasingly important place for cities, in particular on storm water issues," said Craig Johnson, intergovernmental relations representative for the League of Minnesota Cities. "As storm water becomes a bigger and bigger part of city responsibilities, the Board of Soil and Water Resources is the body where rules ... can be appealed for decisions on whether they are appropriate," Johnson added.

A companion, SF850 sponsored by Sen. Lisa Fobbe (DFL-Zimmerman), was laid over March 4 by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HEGARTY

Stimulus money for clean water

Stimulus money could be coming to a water project near you.

HF1756, sponsored by Rep. Kory Kath (DFL-Owatonna), would provide for the use of federal stimulus funds for clean water and drinking water purposes. It would also amend current laws governing Public Facilities Authority loans from the clean

water revolving fund and the drinking water revolving fund.

The clean water fund is expecting \$82.56 million and the drinking water fund is expecting \$24.57 million in federal stimulus money.

According to the bill:

- 50 percent of the funds must be provided as grants;
- at least 20 percent of the funds must be used for projects that address “green” infrastructure, energy and water efficiency improvements or other environmentally innovative activities;
- 50 percent of funds must be under contract for construction within 120 days, with all funds under contract within 12 months;
- projects must be listed on Pollution Control Agency wastewater/stormwater or Department of Health drinking water project priority lists; and
- funds will be awarded to eligible projects in the order they are certified by the PCA/MDH and submit as-bid costs to the PFA.

Approved by the House Cultural and Outdoor Resources Finance Division March 18, the bill awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF1329, sponsored by Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm), awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee.

— S. HEGMAN

U of M water study funding

The University of Minnesota would receive \$750,000 to perform a comprehensive statewide study of ground and surface water, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Mpls).

HF1031 was approved March 12 by the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee and sent to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division.

The appropriation would come from the Clean Water Fund, which will receive a portion of the three-eighths of 1 percent dedicated sales tax to begin being collected July 1, 2009.

Wagenius said the study would be similar to the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan completed by the university in June 2008. A set of study recommendations would create a framework of how to protect, conserve and enhance the quality of ground and surface water. Study results would be due to the Legislature Jan. 1, 2011.

“It’s a huge amount of money, but from everything we’ve heard, this is a drop in the bucket for what we need to take care of our waters,” Wagenius said in response to Rep. Steve Drazkowski (R-Wabasha), who questioned the allocation.

A companion, SF924, sponsored by Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

FAMILY

Raising child care funding

Full-time child care for a preschooler and an infant costs a family between \$15,000 and \$24,000 annually in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and between \$12,000 and \$16,000 in Greater Minnesota, according to Child Care WORKS executive director Susie Brown. That’s not manageable for many low-income working families who may pay, on average, up to 30 percent of their income for child care.

However, the state’s Child Care Assistance Program’s Basic Sliding Fee subsidy, intended to help such families, has not kept pace with

the actual cost of providing care, even when parent co-pays are added. That disparity risks some providers’ business viability.

Rep. Carlos Mariani (DFL-St. Paul) sponsors HF768 that would raise the maximum provider reimbursement rate for child care assistance programs to 75 percent of market rate, and cover additional families on the waiting list for the sliding fee subsidy.

Mariani is concerned the state has “slipped” in its commitment to offer child care assistance since 2003, when the Legislature made significant cuts, but acknowledged the \$125.67 million price tag over the next two fiscal years is much to ask in the current fiscal situation.

“It’s not my intention that we approach this as all or nothing,” Mariani said.

The subsidy is important in economically stressed regions. Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson (DFL-Milaca) said that in 2003, when her youngest child was 3 years old, the child care facility where he was enrolled nearly closed when reimbursement rates were frozen at levels set in 2001.

“And that would have not only deprived those parents who were working at low-wage jobs,” said Jackson, “but it would have deprived me of having the one quality care center in a small town in rural Minnesota.”

The House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over March 12 for possible omnibus bill inclusion. Its companion, SF575, sponsored by Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.

— K. BERGGREN

KIDS’ SHAMPOO



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Josh Winters holds his 2-year-old son, Noah, as his wife, Misty, talks to media members during a March 12 news conference bringing attention to a new report and tests released by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics and Minnesota-based Healthy Legacy. The report shows that dozens of top-selling children’s bath products are contaminated with cancer-causing chemicals formaldehyde and 1.4 dioxane.

Surrogate parentage presumptions

When a woman who has had a hysterectomy wants a child, an egg donor and a woman to carry the baby to term must be found.

Because current law assumes that genetic parents are birth parents, Steve Snyder said a handful of court documents must now be filed at a cost of many hundreds of dollars or more, and court appearances must be made — even if all parties to the surrogate agree.

An attorney who has practiced in this area for more than 20 years and chairman of the American Bar Association Reproductive and Genetic Technologies Committee, Snyder said current laws are outdated. “They were drafted before genetics were split in terms of creating parentage, before egg donors were possible, before surrogate pregnancies were possible. It has an archaic way of establishing parentage that presumes the genetic parents are the birth parents.”

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) sponsors HF890 to help update and streamline the process.

"This is a bill that has nothing to do with whether you think assisted reproduction is good, bad or otherwise. But it exists out there, and we want to make sure all our laws reflect the circumstances where all the parties agree," Simon said.

Approved on a split-voice vote March 16 by the House Civil Justice Committee, the bill awaits action by the full House. A companion, SF436, sponsored by Sen. Linda Higgins (DFL-Mpls), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Simon said the bill does four things:

- it says the same rules that apply to paternity determinations would also apply to maternity determinations;
- establishes a presumption of paternity if the parties expressly agree that there is an assisted reproduction agreement;
- allows courts to award custody based on agreement of the parties; and
- it allows prebirth orders of maternity or paternity.

"If there are contested procedures, the existing paternity law determines them," Snyder said. "It says nothing about the procedure as to permitting or facilitating compensation."

Minnesota Family Council President Tom Prichard expressed concern this would promote surrogacy and help with "facilitating movement away from biological parents being the parents of their children."

— M. COOK

GAME & FISH

Elk population needs thinning

Farmers from northwestern Minnesota are tired of elk herds destroying their crops and damaging their fences.

Appearing before the House Game, Fish and Forestry Division March 16, four farmers said they support an amendment to the division's omnibus bill that would require the Department of Natural Resources to either come up with a better management plan or declare open season on elk beginning this year.

The amendment is included in the omnibus bill, HF1238, sponsored by Rep. David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake). Approved by the division, it awaits action by the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee. A companion, SF1116, sponsored by Sen. Satveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The DNR issued 23 elk hunting permits in 2008 for Kittson and Marshall counties where two herds thrive, said Ed Boggess, deputy director of the department's fish and wildlife

division. If there is an elk hunt in 2009, the application deadline would be July 17, along with a \$10 application fee per hunter and a \$250 hunting license for a party of up to two hunters.

Farmers also traditionally have had recourse through a Department of Agriculture compensation fund, but the fund has dried up due to the propensity of elk causing problems.

Rep. Dave Olin (DFL-Thief River Falls) sponsors HF309, which, as amended by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division March 17, would raise the fund to \$150,000 during the current fiscal year and appropriate \$250,000 in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. The bill was held over for possible inclusion in the division's omnibus bill. Its companion, SF324, sponsored by Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Plummer), was held over by the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Budget and Policy Division for possible omnibus bill inclusion.

— S. HEGARTY

HEALTH

Containers for needle disposal

Most needles and syringes used in households are thrown in the garbage after use, putting solid waste disposal workers at risk of being punctured or contracting infectious diseases, according to Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview).

Gardner sponsors HF1372 that would require retailers who sell needles, lancets and syringes, known as sharps, to also give customers a sharps disposal container. For each box of 90 or more syringes sold, the customer must also be offered a container, which the sharps manufacturer must supply to the retailer at no charge. An estimated 30 million needles are sold each year in Minnesota, said Tom Erickson, chief executive officer of St. Paul-based UltiMed, which operates medical device manufacturing facilities.

The bill does not divert sharps from household waste into the medical waste-stream as he'd prefer, but it is a "step in the right direction," Erickson told the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee March 17.

The committee approved the bill, which was moved to the House floor. Its companion, SF1323 sponsored by Sen. Kathy Sheran (DFL-Mankato), awaits action by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

HIGHER EDUCATION

No aid cut for private schools

A proposal to cut financial aid for students at private, for-profit colleges was defeated by a House division.

HF1414, sponsored by Rep. Karla Bigham (DFL-Cottage Grove), would have made students at schools like Rasmussen College and Globe University/Minnesota School of Business ineligible to receive money through the state grant program.

Grants to students at for-profit schools currently account for more than \$20 million annually. Bigham said the bill would redirect that money to students at public colleges and universities and also private nonprofit schools like Macalester College and Hamline University.

During a March 17 hearing of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division, supporters argued it makes sense for the state to prioritize funding for public and nonprofit schools during a budget crisis.

Graeme Allen, government relations director for the Minnesota State University Student Association, said that while half of U.S. states spend 75 percent or more of their financial aid funds on students at public institutions, Minnesota only spends 61 percent. He said Minnesota also ranks third in the nation in providing financial aid to students at for-profit schools.

"In a time of declining investment in higher education, especially for our publicly funded institutions, should we be funding those attending for-profit institutions?" Allen said.

That didn't sway opponents, who said the bill would unfairly take away options from students who are merely choosing the education they think will work best for them.

"I really believe that we need to support all forms of education in the state of Minnesota, and not just limit it to the state institutions," said Rep. Bob Dettmer (R-Forest Lake).

Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville) sponsors the companion, SF1361, which awaits action by the Senate Higher Education Budget and Policy Division.

— N. BUSSE

HOUSING

\$100 million for affordable housing

Affordable housing advocates seek multi-millions of dollars to provide additional affordable housing opportunities across the state.

Sponsored by Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-

Mpls), HF1354 would give the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency authority to issue up to \$100 million in nonprofit housing bonds to local governments and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. Grantees could then acquire land for, or to construct, affordable rental housing units.

The agency might also provide grants to public land trust agencies, such as the City of Lakes Community Land Trust, which has provided homes for 650 families.

Under these programs, homebuyers receive counseling to help them manage and understand their mortgages, insurance policy and closing documents. Recipients own the home but not the land it sits upon. They are able to resell the home and receive a small percentage of the profit. The majority is reinvested in the land trust program, said Jeff Washburn, director of the City of Lakes Community Land Trust program.

The House Housing Finance and Policy and Public Health Finance Division held the bill over March 17 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion, SF1382, sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), is scheduled to be heard March 20 by a Senate housing subcommittee.

Rural Minnesota agencies also provide similar support services, including help for foreclosures. First Homes, sponsored by the Rochester Area Foundation, manages nearly 200 homes within a 30-mile radius of the city.

"In Minnesota, we have towns like Mankato, Albert Lea, Austin, Northfield, Chatfield and Le Center that have their own serious foreclosure issues right now. Because those communities haven't received (Neighborhood Stabilization Funds), I think it's important to note that those cities don't have any subsidies available to do work in remediation for foreclosures," said Sean Allen, First Homes director.

— S. HEGARTY

Manufactured homes protection

Owners and residents of manufactured home parks are supposed to be paying into a relocation trust fund to protect the homeowners should the park owner decide to close the park or sell the land. The problem is only half of the park owners and residents pay into the trust fund and there appears to be no enforcement of the year-old law. Some homeowners fear there may not be enough in the fund, should they need to rely on it.

HF356, sponsored by Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview), would amend the law to allow park owners to collect a trust fund fee as a separate line item, along with the lot rent. The monthly fee would be \$1. An estimated 50,000 families live in manufactured homes in Minnesota.

The House Housing Finance and Policy and Public Health Finance Division laid the bill over March 18 for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill. A companion, SF1269, sponsored by Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm), was scheduled to be heard March 20 by the Housing Subcommittee of the Senate Economic Development and Housing Budget Division and Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

A problem with the fee notification process is that it has been provided only in English. Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls), the division chairwoman, urged Gardner to include a provision that requires notification in multiple languages.

— S. HEGARTY

Reverse mortgage rules tightened

Though reverse mortgages can provide a safety net for many older Minnesotans hit hard by the economic downturn, they should be a "last resort" for most people, said Shirley Hunt Alexander, American Association of Retired Persons state advocacy chairwoman.

Seniors are increasingly using reverse mortgages "to pay for life necessities such as needed home repairs, health care or long-term care, and sometimes property tax," Alexander said.

Reverse mortgages are available to people age 62 or older who borrow a lump sum or receive monthly payments or a line of credit against the value of their home while they continue to live there. The loans must be paid in full when the borrower moves or dies.

Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL-Mpls) sponsors HF528, which he calls a "proactive measure" to protect seniors from unscrupulous lenders or counselors who target the reverse mortgages to people who don't really need them, or who try to sell borrowers other products simultaneously.

The bill calls for a 30-day waiting period during which a borrower could cancel a reverse mortgage, instead of the current three-day period, and would ban the lender from cross-selling other products such as long-term health care insurance or annuities funded by proceeds the reverse mortgage.

The 30-day period troubled opponents, who said it isn't realistic.

"Reverse mortgages have made a huge difference in my clients' lives," said Beth Paterson, executive vice president of Prestige Mortgage, allowing them to retire, pay medical bills and even avoid foreclosure.

She called the 30-day period impossible because the entire time frame of a reverse mortgage transaction from inquiry to closing is usually about that long.

Paterson advocates "testing and licensing

of anybody originating a reverse mortgage" to help prevent ill-advised transactions.

Approved March 13 by the House Labor and Consumer Protection Division and March 17 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee, it awaits action by the House Civil Justice Committee. Its companion, SF489, sponsored by Sen. Tarryl Clark (DFL-St. Cloud), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— K. BERGGREN

Covering short-term housing costs

Homebuilders or remodelers who breach their warranty could pay for more than just repairs. They might have to pay for a homeowner's place to stay.

Sponsored by Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview), HF239 would add reasonable costs of necessary short-term housing to money that homeowners could receive for a warranty breach.

Approved March 18 on a split-voice vote by the House Civil Justice Committee, the bill next goes to the House floor. A companion, SF6, sponsored by Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park), awaits action by the full Senate.

Reasonable costs could not exceed the current federal maximum per diem rate that applies to the property location.

"If you're a federal employee, if you're traveling on some federal contract of some kind, there's a master list of maximum, not-to-exceed dollar figures for lodging per day," Gardner said. "You couldn't be in Shoreview, where I live, and have to be out of your house and then check into a swanky hotel in Minneapolis. You'd have to go to the swanky Hampton Inn in Shoreview."

Although the bill has been reduced since first introduced, Lisa Frenette, government affairs director of the Builders Association of Minnesota, is still uncomfortable with the bill's subjectivity. She is concerned that it is not defined who would determine when and how long a person should stay away from their residence.

"We could have about 10 pages of legislation to determine exactly under what specific conditions you would have to leave your house," Gardner said. "But every house is different and every situation is different. I thought that would be a little bit too meticulous and nitpicky to try and do that."

— M. COOK

HUMAN SERVICES

No new resident restrictions

New residents would have been eligible only for state assistance equal to the amount

from the state they previously resided, under a bill defeated 12-7 by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee March 12.

Sponsored by House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), HF1036 would limit the amount of General Assistance and Minnesota Family Investment Program payments for those living in the state for less than 12 months. Seifert said it would curb the number of people coming from other states who “take advantage of the state treasury and our good will.”

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the current wait time is 30 days with some hardship exemptions.

Opponents argue there isn’t data that proves people are moving here for state assistance. Further, the change would also violate the federal and state constitutions, Rep. Thomas Huntley (DFL-Duluth) said. Similar California legislation was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1999.

Ralonda Mason, attorney with St. Cloud Area Legal Services, said Minnesota has tried similar legislation twice before and both were found to be unconstitutional.

Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls) asked how counties would implement and obtain benefit information from other states. Seifert acknowledged the implementation could pose problems, but said “it is doable.”

Brian Rusche, executive director of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, said the bill would “pour salts in the wounds of people who are already struggling.” It tries to curb something that is possibly very isolated, he said.

A companion, SF860, sponsored by Sen. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

— P. OSTBERG

Newborn screening revisited

Minnesota law requires written informed consent for the collection of genetic information.

HF1341, sponsored by Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Mpls), would exempt newborn genetic screening from this process, requiring that testing be done unless the parents opt out of the program. Under the bill, the Health Department would collect and test the samples for heritable and congenital disorders and destroy them within 25 months of birth.

The bill was approved March 17 by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee and now goes to the House Civil Justice Committee. A companion, SF1478, sponsored by Sen. Linda

Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park), awaits action by the Senate Health, Housing and Family Security Committee.

Since 1997, the department has collected and stored newborn screening samples. But, in 2007, a Minnesota administrative law judge ruled the department violates the Genetic Privacy Law in collecting the information.

Thissen said the bill is an attempt to, “save the newborn screening program,” while addressing concerns over the length of time the samples are stored. Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed a similar bill in 2008 that would have allowed the department to store the samples indefinitely.

Twila Brase, president of Citizens’ Council on Health Care, said the bill is “about the storage, use and dissemination of newborn blood and DNA without the consent of parents.” It would also allow hospital staff to sign a form saying they have informed the parents of their options, rather than requiring a parental signature.

The department’s Web site states the program tests infants for 53 rare and serious medical conditions that if not detected can lead to chronic conditions or death.

— P. OSTBERG

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Annexation by ordinance

Many Minnesota cities say they’re being taken advantage of by residents in neighboring townships who use city services and infrastructure without helping pay for any of it. Rep. Ryan Winkler (DFL-Golden Valley) sponsors a bill intended to address the issue.

HF1297 would make it easier for cities to annex land in neighboring townships. The bill would provide for a streamlined annexation process and specify how much cities have to reimburse townships for annexed areas. In addition, it would define “urban or suburban” areas for purposes of annexation proceedings.

The House Local Government Division approved the bill March 16 and referred it to the House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

Supporters say the legislation is needed to give cities the ability to bring township residents into their municipal property tax base.

Warroad Mayor Bob Marvin said residents in his city subsidize a public library, municipal airport, parks and other infrastructure. Their neighbors in Lake Township are able to take advantage of these facilities while paying a fraction of what Warroad residents pay in property taxes. Marvin said township officials

refuse to discuss annexation with the city, and that Warroad can’t afford the legal fees involved in annexation disputes.

Speaking in opposition to the bill, Minnesota Association of Townships Attorney Kent Sulem said it would strong-arm townships into accepting annexation under whatever terms the cities want. He added that it would rob property owners in townships of their voice in annexation proceedings.

“What the city wants, the city gets,” Sulem said, describing his take on the bill’s provisions.

Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel) sponsors the companion, SF1163, which awaits action by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

— N. BUSSE

Eminent domain redux

A group of frustrated property owners are pushing lawmakers to close what they say is a gaping loophole in state law restricting the use of eminent domain.

Three years ago, Minnesota enacted a law protecting property owners from having their land taken by local governments to make way for shopping malls, condominiums or other economic development projects. It left one big exception: utility companies. An electric utility company can, for example, still take private land it needs to construct new power lines.

Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield) sponsors HF1182 that would repeal the exemption for utilities and other public service corporations. The House Local Government Division approved the bill March 13 and sent it to the House State and Local Government Operations Reform, Technology and Elections Committee.

“This is a fundamental question that democracies must deal with, and that is: Can we protect the rights of individuals and also balance out the interests of others?” Bly said.

Rod Crass, a lawyer and landowner, said it doesn’t make sense that utilities don’t have to abide by the same rules as cities, counties and school districts in acquiring private property.

“I don’t understand ... why your property rights ought to depend on who takes your property. Those rights ought to be the same for everybody,” Crass said.

Opponents like Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) argue the bill would have serious implications for utility companies and their customers, and also make it more difficult to achieve the state’s renewable energy goals.

“If we take away this exemption, there’s no

doubt in my mind that we have the potential of making it more difficult to route needed transmission lines,” Lanning said. “That all is going to drive up cost to our customers.”

Sen. Kevin Dahle (DFL-Northfield) sponsors the companion, SF1112, which awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

— N. BUSSE

MILITARY

Getting equal credit

Experience matters, and those who take courses while in the military could be awarded credit toward a degree at the University of Minnesota or the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

Course equivalency standards are in place for transfers between the institutions, but HF1281, sponsored by Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-Clara City), would instruct the institutions to develop course equivalencies for learning acquired as a result of successful completion of formal military courses.

Before being approved by the House Veterans Affairs Division March 13, Koenen amended the bill to delete a provision where a veteran could qualify for in-state tuition rates, irrespective of the veteran's state of residence prior to discharge from active military service.

“This is more than just about recognizing the service of veterans,” said Michael Lovas, veterans coordinator at the University of Minnesota. He explained the need for consistency across universities and college in regard to military credits, citing an example of a veteran receiving credit for military courses, but not having them apply to their university major. The student could then face the problem of a too high credit total, making them ineligible for financial aid to finish up the degree.

Currently, the university grants equivalency credit for courses it teaches, said Mary Kosken, director of student services. MnSCU uses the American Council on Education guidelines as it considers credit equivalency, she said.

Col. Eric Ahlness, director of government relations for the Department of Military Affairs, said the military tries to align its course curriculum with civilian standards and makes sure the teachers are qualified to instruct.

Also approved March 18 by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee, the bill now awaits action in the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance and Policy Division.

Its companion, SF361, sponsored by Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park), was laid over by the Senate Higher Education Budget and

Policy Division for possible inclusion in its omnibus bill.

— L. SCHUTZ

Military honors proclaimed

A Minnesota Honors Vietnam Era Veterans day is being planned for June 13 on the State Capitol grounds.

Information about the event was announced during the House Veterans Affairs Division meeting March 13, when Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-North Branch) offered HF1400 to declare the date as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Minnesota.

“This is a time to bring healing and restoration. I believe this is going to be a worthwhile celebration,” said Richard Jenkins Sr., commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and a Vietnam veteran who is among the event planners.

A replica of the Washington D.C. Vietnam Memorial is expected to be on display, and a Bob Hope impersonator is scheduled to recreate the entertainer's famous skits he would perform for troops.

According to information on the Web site, www.mnhonorsvietnamvets.org, the day will begin with a Gold Star Family prayer service and end with the evening entertainment.

The bill was approved by the division and March 18, by the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee. It now moves to the House floor.

Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing) sponsors the companion bill, SF1142. It awaits action on the Senate floor.

Also approved in the committees was a bill to designate March 25 as Medal of Honor Day.

Sponsored by Rep. Mike Obermueller (DFL-Eagan) and Sen. Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan) SF236*/HF433 would honor Minnesotans who have received the Medal of Honor, which was first presented on that date in 1863. The bill was passed by the Senate on March 16 64-0. It now awaits action by the House.

— L. SCHUTZ

RECREATION

Naturalists and kiosks in state parks

Research suggests that more children can identify cartoon characters than they can trees or wildflowers, said Jamie McBride, president of the Minnesota Naturalists' Association.

McBride told the House Environment Policy and Oversight Committee March 17 that although Minnesotans care about the environment, they don't know much about it, and they think they know more than they do. He supports HF1612 that would more than double the number of naturalists working in

state parks, create summer naturalist jobs for college students and build electronic informational kiosks near campgrounds.

Sponsored by Rep. Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton), the bill would establish a Minnesota Naturalist Corps under the supervision of the Department of Natural Resources. Thirty college students would be hired as summer naturalists to lead nature hikes, campfire programs and other educational and interpretive events at a cost of \$270,000 each year of the 2010-2011 biennium. Corps naturalists would be paid for their work.

Another \$640,000 would be used each year of the next biennium to double the number of full-time naturalists from eight to 16 in state parks.

A third aspect of the bill would allocate \$760,000 for the construction of informational kiosks to be placed near campgrounds in various regions of the state.

Funding for all of the projects would come from the Parks and Trails Fund, dedicated money resulting from the constitutional amendment voters approved last year for a three-eighths of 1 percent sales tax increase.

“If we're looking at ways to connect people to the out-of-doors, we need naturalist programming,” said Judy Erickson, a Parks and Trails councilmember.

The bill was referred to the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division. The companion, SF1612, sponsored by Sen. Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), awaits action in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

— S. HEGARTY

SAFETY

Pointing a laser at an aircraft

A laser device about the size of a ballpoint pen could help bring down a helicopter.

Jim Englin, a state patrol pilot, urged the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee to imagine a bright flash bulb going off directly in their faces. “You'd blink it off, you may have some discomfort for a little while, but it would go away. You can imagine what the problem would be if you were in an aircraft.”

He said the state patrol suffered three laser illumination events in 2008. Arrests were made in two cases, but charges were never brought forth.

Current federal law is designed to secure larger air carriers, leaving a loophole and forcing states or local municipalities to prohibit discharging a laser into the cockpit of an aircraft.

Sponsored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul), HF1097 would make it a felony

in Minnesota, punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

Approved March 12 by the committee, the bill was sent to the House Finance Committee with a requested re-referral to the House Public Safety Finance Division. A companion, SF1408, sponsored by Senate President James Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Englin showed packaging for one such light, which runs on AAA batteries and can be bought at many office supply stores or big box retailers. "It's advertised as the most powerful legal green laser pointer available. It has a range of over 10 miles in just this one little simple pen." The device is rated 3A on a scale where four is a military or commercial application.

"We're less than 1,000 feet from the ground, and we're less than 100 mph. It gives the ability to track an aircraft in that flight regime fairly easily," Englin said. "This simple penlight can cause a great deal of damage and a great deal of carnage, if you will, if we were to crash."

The bill would exempt search and rescue situations when the person on the ground is indicating their location.

— M. Cook

Helping find missing adults

Nobody should have to go through what Annette and Brian Swanson are living through.

The Swansons son, Brandon, has been missing since May 14, 2008, when his car got stuck in a ditch near Taunton along the Lincoln and Lyon county line. As his parents

were on their way to help, the cell phone connection went dead at 3:10 a.m.

Choking back tears, Annette Swanson told the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee March 12 that local authorities were informed three hours later that he was missing, but because Brandon was 19, no help was immediately provided. Following a one-day search, authorities told her to go home, and they'd call when more is known.

"I was in total shock and disbelief at that moment," she said.

Sponsored by House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall), HF1242 would help families like the Swansons by expanding the state's missing child program to adults who are missing and endangered. "This is about adults who go missing under dangerous circumstances," he said. "It makes minor changes in law, but makes big changes to families affected by having missing family, friends."

Approved by the committee, the bill was sent to the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF1146, sponsored by Sen. Dennis Frederickson (R-New Ulm), awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill would piggyback off the child act by, in part, requiring law enforcement to take a missing persons report without delay, no matter the missing person's age; immediately conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if the person is missing, and whether the person is endangered; and promptly notify all other law enforcement agencies of the situation.

"Missing children must be entered into the

National Crime Information Center, while reporting missing adults is voluntary," Brian Swanson said. "This is where Brandon's Law steps in."

It also spells out information that must be released to the missing person's family and clarifies that the agency taking the report be the lead agency in the investigation.

Jim Franklin, executive director of the Minnesota Sheriff's Association, expressed concern about potential fiscal costs to local units of government, and concern about giving the family information in a bad situation, such as domestic abuse cases.

"I believe we can work through the differences," said Tim O'Malley, superintendent of the state's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. "We can make this practical and workable."

— M. Cook

TAXES

Looking for a revamp

A program that hasn't changed since its inception could be studied to determine its effectiveness.

Sponsored by Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington), HF479 would provide \$50,000 for the commissioner of revenue to conduct a study of the metropolitan fiscal disparities program and report to the House and Senate tax committees by Feb. 1, 2010.

The House Property and Local Sales Tax Division held the bill over March 17 for possible inclusion in its report to the House Taxes Committee. A companion, SF1713, sponsored by Sen. David Hann (R-Eden Prairie), awaits action by the Senate Taxes Committee.

"This hasn't changed since before some of you were born," Lenczewski said. "Not a word of it has changed since then and it hasn't been studied."

According to the nonpartisan House Research Department, the fiscal disparities program is a system for the partial sharing of commercial-industrial property tax base among all jurisdictions within a geographic area. In Minnesota, two programs are used: the primary one was created in 1971 and operates in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area; a smaller version was created in 1995 for the Iron Range.

The proposed study would be used to consider whether the program is meeting the following goals and what changes could be made:

- reducing the extent to which the property tax system encourages inefficient development patterns;
- ensuring that the benefits of economic



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Brian and Annette Swanson listen to Rep. Marty Seifert, left, the bill's sponsor, testify March 12 before the House Public Safety Policy and Oversight Committee in support of establishing Brandon's Law, which would implement procedures for investigating missing adult cases. The Swanson's 19-year-old son, Brandon, has been missing since May 14, 2008.

growth are shared throughout the region;

- allowing taxing jurisdictions to deliver services in proportion to their tax effort;
- compensating jurisdictions for low-tax-yield properties that provide regional benefits;
- promoting a fair distribution of tax burdens across the region; and
- reducing economic losses from competition for commercial-industrial tax base.

— S. HEGMAN

Rating property tax

Property tax proposals could be subject to a rating system in deciding their usefulness.

Sponsored by Rep. Denise Dittrich (DFL-Champlin), HF1261 is the result of a working group charged with creating benchmarks, critical indicators and principles for legislators to use when evaluating property tax proposals. The House Property and Local Sales Tax Division held it over March 17 for possible inclusion in its report to the House Taxes Committee. There is no Senate companion.

"We rewrote and reworked this several times and still consider it a work in progress," Dittrich said.

The bill would also establish a 12-member property tax working group comprised of House and Senate members, various lobbying groups and the state's revenue commissioner. The working group would make its advisory recommendations to the chairs of the House and Senate tax committees by Feb. 1, 2011.

"This is outstanding work," said Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth), the division chairman. "There's a lot of accountability here, which is what we wanted to do. It raises the discussion to a new level."

Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) asked if local units of government could use the indicators to examine their own local tax effectiveness. Dittrich said local units were surveyed as to the kinds of tools they'd like the state to use, but "we did not look at that to the level you are talking about."

"(The state) needs to monitor critical indicators, but I think local units of government need to do the same thing," Lanning said.

Eric Willette, property tax analyst with the Department of Revenue, said that while he was supportive of implementing this scale, he had concerns. "I'm not exactly sure how it will work and how well it can be administered." He said it would add responsibility to people in the department during the busiest time to year, but "we want to give it a try."

— S. HEGMAN

Extra money for housing offenders

Rising costs and a lack of state money have created some issues for counties housing

sexual predators who are awaiting civil trial.

Sponsored by Rep. Larry Haws (DFL-St. Cloud), HF850 would authorize a special levy for the difference between one-half the costs of confining sex offenders undergoing the civil commitment process and any state payments for this purpose. The House Property and Local Sales Tax Division held the bill over March 18 for possible inclusion in its report to the House Taxes Committee. There is no Senate companion.

According to the Department of Revenue, if cities or counties choose to impose special levies under the bill, the result would be an increase in state payments of homestead property tax refunds due to an increased property tax burden on homeowners.

Keith Carlson, executive director of the Metropolitan Inter-County Association, said counties have been hit with about a cumulative \$7 million annual cost because of a rise in civil commitments.

Janet Reigstad, community supports division director with Stearns County, said between 2004 and 2008, the lowest amount paid by the county for sex offender holds was almost \$37,000 for three offenders in 2006. The next year it cost almost \$202,000 for five offenders.

"Hold costs should not be borne solely by the county real estate tax levy," Reigstad said. "Ideally there would be a state appropriation so the costs would be borne by the state or shared between the state and counties."

County social service agencies are required to carry out duties under the Civil Commitment Act for people considered sexually dangerous. Prior to the actual commitment court hearing, people can be held involuntarily at treatment facilities through either an emergency hold, by a doctor or by the court. Sex offenders can be held for an indefinite period beyond the 14-day limit. Counties are responsible for paying all costs for these holds.

— S. HEGMAN

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation council creation

People with disabilities living in the Twin Cities metropolitan area who cannot transport themselves can use programs like Metro Mobility to get around. In Greater Minnesota, vanpools or small buses on non-fixed routes perform those duties.

However, there is some overlap in service areas, which can mean greater user costs.

Rep. Paul Gardner (DFL-Shoreview) would like to see better coordination through the creation of a 17-member Minnesota Council on Transportation Access.

"We're expending a lot of public dollars

in a way that is not as efficient as it could be," he said, adding that costs are often four or five times greater to the user compared with mass transit. Current agency costs for transportation could not be provided, but Gardner expects the council recommendations to save money. The bill includes \$300,000 for council expenses.

Approved on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, by the House Transportation Finance and Policy Division, HF1373 awaits action by the House Finance Committee. A companion, SF1226, sponsored by Sen. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls) is scheduled to be heard March 27 by the Senate State and Local Government Operations and Oversight Committee.

"There is an inter-agency group that is working under an executive order to try and help agencies coordinate their efforts to help provide more efficiency," Gardner said. "This bill would pretty much raise that to a higher level so that council, which is made up of some of the folks who help direct some of these programs, can all be on the same page."

Gardner noted that executive orders can "fade out" with administration changes, and that a legislative direction would be permanent.

He said an efficiency coordination example could be the creation of one phone line a consumer can call to reach a universal dispatcher who would have access to all providers. That person could find the right ride at the right time, instead of having the consumer call multiple providers to schedule an appointment that meets their needs.

— M. COOK

GPS mounting bill passed

It might be easier for drivers to determine where to go without taking their eyes away from the windshield.

Approved 131-0 by the House March 19 without debate was HF85, sponsored by Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar). It would allow GPS or other navigation systems to be mounted or located near the bottom-most portion of a windshield.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm) is the sponsor.

State law currently allows rearview mirrors, sun visors and electronic toll collection devices be mounted on a vehicle's windshield, but many drivers illegally have their GPS unit attached as well.

Juhnke said the bill would help with road safety because a GPS system must now be mounted on a console, forcing drivers to look down at the device.

— M. COOK

Monday, March 16

HF1705-Hornstein (DFL) **Finance**

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodation inclusion required as part of trunk highway bridge improvement program.

HF1706-Rukavina (DFL) **Finance**

Virginia; Miners Memorial renovation funding provided.

HF1707-Otremba (DFL) **Finance**

Rural pharmacy planning and transition grant program funding provided.

HF1708-Hosch (DFL) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Mental health provisions amended, Medical Assistance reimbursement and eligibility changed, provider qualification and training requirements changed, mental health behavioral aides services amended and an excluded service added.

HF1709-Hosch (DFL) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Child welfare provisions changed.

HF1710-Hilstrom (DFL) **Finance**

Brooklyn Center; Northwest Hennepin Family Center grant funding provided.

HF1711-Jackson (DFL) **Finance**

Local bridge replacement and rehabilitation funding provided.

HF1712-Jackson (DFL) **Environment Policy & Oversight**

Residents 90 years of age or older provided free angling licenses.

HF1713-Abeler (R) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Radiological technology examination preparation practices prohibited and penalties established.

HF1714-Paymar (DFL) **Finance**

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts funding provided.

HF1715-Emmer (R) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Encounter data submission requirement repealed.

HF1716-Emmer (R) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Payment reform and quality measurement requirements repealed.

HF1717-Atkins (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Motor vehicle sales and distribution regulated.

HF1718-Clark (DFL) **Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division**

Driver's license application procedures and requirements modified.

HF1719-Atkins (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Viatical settlements regulated, and Viatical Settlements Model Act of the National Association of Insurance Commissions enacted and modified.

HF1720-Huntley (DFL) **Finance**

State health care program payment rates reduced to psychiatrists.

HF1721-Wagenius (DFL) **Environment Policy & Oversight**

Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources membership terms modified.

HF1722-Huntley (DFL) **Finance**

Physician payment rates for state health care programs reduced.

HF1723-Juhnke (DFL) **Finance**

Economic stimulus provided through renewable energy and energy efficiency grants.

HF1724-Faust (DFL) **Taxes**

Counties authorized to use certain tax-forfeited land proceeds for other purposes.

HF1725-Persell (DFL) **Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Residential heating and delivered-fuel supplier reports required.

HF1726-Persell (DFL) **Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Low-income customer rights provided for delivered home heating fuel vendors.

HF1727-Hansen (DFL) **Environment Policy & Oversight**

Wellhead protection areas made eligible for the reinvest in Minnesota reserve program, conservation reserve program modified.

HF1728-Loeffler (DFL) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Provisions amended for child care programs, program integrity, adult supports including general assistance medical care and group residential housing and Minnesota Family Investment Program.

HF1729-Faust (DFL) **Finance**

Minnesota Public Radio, Inc. funding provided.

HF1730-Dill (DFL) **Finance**

Biomass facility grant funding provided.

HF1731-Mullery (DFL) **Finance**

Hennepin County; Victory Memorial Drive restoration funding provided.

HF1732-Clark (DFL) **Finance**

Demonstration project for high-risk adults funding provided.

HF1733-Eken (DFL) **Finance**

Water protection rules compliance funding provided.

HF1734-Lanning (R) **Environment Policy & Oversight**

Basin watershed boards, management policies and taxing authority established.

HF1735-Lanning (R) **Finance**

Buffalo-Red River Watershed District; flood hazard mitigation funding provided.

HF1736-Masin (DFL) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Medical provider conflicts of interests prohibited, criminal and civil penalties provided.

HF1737-Brynaert (DFL) **Finance**

Minnesota State University, Mankato; International Renewable Energy Technical Institute funding provided.

HF1738-Mack (R) **State & Local Government** **Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Regular legislative sessions prohibited in even-numbered years.

HF1739-Sterner (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

No-fault auto insurance policies modified, first-party benefits increased, arbitration awards regulated, balance billing by health care providers prohibited, accident record information regulated and civil liability in recovery of health care expenses clarified.

HF1740-Winkler (DFL) **Civil Justice**

Certain marriages performed in other states recognized in Minnesota.

HF1741-Hilty (DFL) **Finance**

Cromwell; energy-efficient furnace and light bulb funding provided.

HF1742-Hilty (DFL) **State & Local Government** **Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Percentage of votes a candidate for statewide or legislative office must receive in order to obtain public financing increased.

HF1743-Hausman (DFL) **Finance**

Transit improvement areas funding provided.

HF1744-Hilty (DFL) **State & Local Government** **Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Technology accessibility standards and advisory committee established.

HF1745-Ruud (DFL) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Health occupations provisions modified; licensed health care professional definition expanded; food, beverage and lodging establishments provisions modified; federal government rules required to implement the minimum data set for resident reimbursement classification.

HF1746-Bigham (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Customers protected from injuries resulting from use of inflatable play equipment used for commercial purposes, trained supervisor presence and liability insurance required.

HF1747-Clark (DFL) **Finance**

Green jobs in the food production sector report required, farm-to-school and farm-to-home pilot projects funding provided.

HF1748-Sailer (DFL) **Finance**

National solar testing and certification laboratory funding provided.

HF1749-Winkler (DFL) **Commerce & Labor**

Retail liquor operation's separate limited storage facility use authorized.

HF1750-Abeler (R) **Health Care & Human Services** **Policy & Oversight**

Human services licensing provisions modified; and data practices, disqualifications and background study requirements modified.

HF1751-Kelly (R)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Driver's license or identification card applicant permitted to designate an emergency contact person and emergency contact data access procedures established.

HF1752-Drazkowski (R)
Taxes
Political contribution tax refund repealed.

HF1753-Mahoney (DFL)
Finance
Summer academy established and tuition grant funding provided.

HF1754-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
Energy or commerce projects and activities funding provided; assessments, audits, insurance, public utilities, cooperative electric associations and municipal power agencies provisions modified.

HF1755-Beard (R)
Commerce & Labor
Agent wagering authorized.

HF1756-Kath (DFL)
Finance
Federal funds allocated for clean water and drinking water loans and grants.

HF1757-Brod (R)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Department of Health and Human Services established, merger of the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services required.

HF1758-Kahn (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Preteen immunizations information required, meningococcal disease, human papilloma virus and other diseases and vaccines information included.

HF1759-Kahn (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Hospital-acquired infections reporting required and advisory committee established.

HF1760-Thao (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Continuing health care provisions modified, Medical Assistance, nursing facilities and data management modifications provided.

HF1761-Anderson, S. (R)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Single-occupant hybrid vehicles authorized to operate in high-occupancy vehicle lanes and dynamic shoulder lanes.

HF1762-Buesgens (R)
Finance
Sales and use tax rate increase dedicated for natural resources and cultural heritage purposes repealed and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1763-Abeler (R)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Chiropractic practice provisions modified.

HF1764-Bigham (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Board of Pharmacy required to report all board recommended controlled substance schedule changes to the Legislature.

HF1765-Olin (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Fourth-degree assault crime expanded.

HF1766-Hilty (DFL)
Finance
Moose Lake; sex offender treatment program facilities funding provided.

HF1767-Nelson (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Unlicensed construction contractor and subcontractor registration required and fee imposed.

HF1768-Lesch (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Sex trafficking criminal penalties increased; victim housing and support services provided; technical training for judges, prosecutors and law enforcement provided; public awareness increased; Minnesota Family Investment Program eligibility and waiver provisions addressed.

HF1769-Downey (R)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Human services licensing requirements exemption provided.

HF1770-Sailer (DFL)
Environment Policy & Oversight
Household hazardous waste joint powers boards audits required every five years.

HF1771-Scott (R)
Civil Justice
Child support provisions changed and child support payment redirected.

HF1772-Doty (DFL)
Finance
Debt service equalization aid program state support increased and school bond agricultural credit created.

HF1773-Bly (DFL)
Finance
Scott County; Spring Lake Regional Park funding provided.

HF1774-Nelson (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Deferred compensation plan provisions amended, terms defined and state unclassified employees retirement program and data regulated.

HF1775-Obermueller (DFL)
Finance
School district renewable energy grant program created.

HF1776-Hayden (DFL)
Finance
Metropolitan Council and commissioner of transportation required to provide free transit passes for unemployed individuals seeking employment.

HF1777-Newton (DFL)
Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division
Motor vehicle governing provision modified relating to the display of registration plates or tabs.

HF1778-Otremba (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Prepaid health plans and county-based purchasing plans serving state health care program enrollees required to offer contracts to health care providers subject to the MinnesotaCare tax.

HF1779-Hosch (DFL)
Finance
High-risk adults demonstration project continuation funding provided.

HF1780-Sailer (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Revisor of statutes required to survey recipients of free state publications.

HF1781-Kahn (DFL)
Finance
General legislative and administrative expenses of state government provisions modified.

HF1782-Lenczewski (DFL)
Taxes
State government financing provisions modified relating to taxes; individual income, corporate franchise, property and sales and use additions required; federal section 179 expensing allowances conformed; subtractions disallowed; nonrefundable credits allowed; refundable Minnesota child credit allowed; various provisions repealed.

HF1783-Ruud (DFL)
Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight
Medical Assistance coverage eliminated for certain ineffective preventative services.

HF1784-Drazkowski (R)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Public employee annual salaries that exceed \$100,000 during the biennium ending June 30, 2011, modified.

HF1785-Norton (DFL)
Finance
Accountability measures and reports required as a condition for receiving state funds.

HF1786-Haws (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Unnecessary mandate elimination provided, better public understanding of the roles and responsibilities of state and county governments provided and financial accountability between state and county governments provided.

HF1787-Lillie (DFL)
Taxes
North St. Paul; five-year rule extension allowed for two districts.

HF1788-Juhnke (DFL)
Taxes
Exclusion provided for farm and small business properties.

HF1789-Fritz (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Nonprofit Insurance Trust authorized to self-insure against certain liabilities.

HF1790-Doty (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Casino machine check report required by director of gambling enforcement.

HF1791-Nelson (DFL)
Public Safety Policy & Oversight
Peace officer and corrections officer employment provided under joint power agreements.

HF1792-Kahn (DFL)
Higher Education & Workforce Development Finance & Policy Division
University of Minnesota adjacent neighborhood improvements provided.

HF1793-Nelson (DFL)
State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections
Teachers Retirement Association Board of Trustees size increased by adding an additional elected retired member.

HF1794-Welti (DFL)
Commerce & Labor
Independent contractor standard definition provided for truck driver-operators for purposes of workers' compensation, unemployment compensation and income taxation.

HF1795-Ruud (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Birth center licensure established, uncomplicated birth reimbursement limited and licensed birthing centers designated as essential community providers.

HF1796-Davids (R)**Taxes**

Jobs credit allowed for increasing employment.

HF1797-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

Federal economic recovery fund receipt and appropriation provided.

HF1798-Hansen (DFL)**Taxes**

Agriculture property tax program participation compliance required with certain laws.

HF1799-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Valley Line funding provided.

HF1800-Laine (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Individual health plans prohibited from refusing issue coverage because of a previous cesarean delivery.

HF1801-Laine (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Hospital policies on cesarean sections regulated.

HF1802-Eken (DFL)**Finance**

Mahnomen County; group residential housing supplemental service rate provided.

HF1803-Scalze (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Travel expenses reimbursement limited for state employees.

HF1804-Lieder (DFL)**Finance**

Transit facilities funding provided.

HF1805-Atkins (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Full-time firefighter licensing standards and fees established.

HF1806-Bly (DFL)**Finance**

Northfield; public land and building acquisition spending authorized, public safety and regional emergency operations center funding provided.

HF1807-Zellers (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Metropolitan Airports Commission authorized to extend hours of sale of alcohol.

HF1808-Brod (R)**Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division**

Death certificate of decedent data items expanded and protected, and surviving family members provided greater access to crashed vehicles.

HF1809-Hilty (DFL)**Finance**

Department of Corrections' per diem law modified.

HF1810-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Human trafficking notice posting required at establishments that sell alcoholic beverages at retail and certain lodging establishments that have been involved in prostitution-related activity.

HF1811-Slawik (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Autism Spectrum Disorder Task Force created, appointments provided and report required.

HF1812-Brod (R)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Governor of the State of California memorialized by the Minnesota Legislature to retain jurisdiction over Kathleen Ann Soliah.

HF1813-Juhnke (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Elevators in grain elevators regulation provided.

HF1814-Winkler (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

State employees' personal electronic health records criteria provided.

HF1815-Beard (R)**Finance**

Design-build project provisions modified.

HF1816-Morrow (DFL)**Finance**

Motor carriers, highways and Department of Transportation provisions modified and updated, clarifying and technical changes provided.

HF1817-Ruud (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Basic health plan alternative established for families with children eligible for Medical Assistance.

HF1818-Mariani (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

State commissioners required to provide a poverty impact statement on bills when requested by a legislator.

HF1819-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

Support services required for families with children who are deaf or have hearing loss, testing fee modified.

HF1820-Rosenthal (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Alcohol and controlled substances testing exemption extended.

Wednesday, March 18**HF1821-Kahn (DFL)****Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Genetic information treatment specified, informed consent required prior to collecting genetic information and biological specimens and data collection specified.

HF1822-Sailer (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Volunteer dentist liability immunity provided under certain circumstances.

HF1823-Simon (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Church benefits board authorized to act as trustee of a trust.

HF1824-Severson (R)**Civil Justice**

Marriage between a man and a woman recognized as the only domestic legal union valid in Minnesota, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1825-Urdahl (R)**Rules & Legislative Administration**

President and Congress memorialized to repeal the federal legislation of 1863 ordering the removal of Dakota people from Minnesota and the Dakotas.

HF1826-Severson (R)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Judge vacancies required to be elected, unfinished terms of office excluded from allowable service for retirement, retirement permitted at the end of the term in which the judge has reached the age of 70 and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1827-Paymar (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Judicial sanctions enforced, fines, fees and surcharges included.

HF1828-Hornstein (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Municipal comprehensive plan for affordable housing amendments authorized to be approved by a simple majority.

HF1829-Mullery (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Deed and rental purchase agreement contracts regulated, attorney fees and remedies provided.

HF1830-Huntley (DFL)**Finance**

Seven-county metropolitan area hospital payment rates modified.

HF1831-Huntley (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Performance withholds for managed care plans serving state health care program enrollees modified.

HF1832-Huntley (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

State medical review team process modified and annual report required.

HF1833-Beard (R)**Finance**

Scott County; Trunk Highway 169 Corridor Transit Way funding provided.

HF1834-Thissen (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Plumbing practices and medical gas systems work regulated.

HF1835-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

State grant program's living and miscellaneous expense allowance set.

HF1836-Sertich (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Biomass mandate contracts amendment required and cost recovery authorized.

HF1837-Lesch (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Minnesota Wireless Telephone Consumer Protection Act enacted.

HF1838-Persell (DFL)**Finance**

Paul Bunyan State Trail funding provided.

HF1839-Hilstrom (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Commissioners of health and human services required to provide notice to cities of certain residential programs' licensure.

HF1840-Davids (R)**Finance**

Lanesboro; dam renovation funding provided.

HF1841-Liebling (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Driver's license suspension provision modified.

HF1842-Kahn (DFL)**Finance**

State Capitol restoration funding provided.

HF1843-Jackson (DFL)**State & Local Government
Operations Reform, Technology
& Elections**

Milaca; street improvement districts establishment and street improvement fees apportionment authorized and street improvement plan adoption required.

HF1844-Koenen (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Restorative justice-based diversion programs established.

HF1845-Huntley (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

State health care program enrollees required to select care clinics with clinicians who are certified as health care homes.

HF1846-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Chisholm; sanitary sewer and related infrastructure improvements funding provided.

HF1847-Fritz (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

Health plans required to establish equal out-of-pocket requirements for oral and intravenously administered chemotherapy medications.

HF1848-Newton (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Lifetime spearing and lifetime angling and spearing licenses established.

HF1849-Nelson (DFL)**State & Local Government
Operations Reform, Technology
& Elections**

Local governmental unit mandates removed, extended and modified.

HF1850-Haws (DFL)**Higher Education & Workforce
Development Finance & Policy
Division**

Administration of training and employment functions reorganized, responsibilities transferred to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

HF1851-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Prevailing wage enforcement funding provided.

HF1852-Knuth (DFL)**Finance**

Renewable energy payment incentive period extended and payments directed to other projects from projects whose eligibility to receive payments expires.

HF1853-Atkins (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Various licenses, forms, coverages, marketing practices and records regulated, data classified and coordination of health insurance benefits provided.

HF1854-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Hibbing; fire station renovation funding provided.

HF1855-Thao (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

Athletic trainer provisions changed.

HF1856-Swails (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

School districts authorized to report actual costs instead of allocated costs for contracted services, field trip costs clarified, resident district involvement broadened when a student is placed in another district for care and treatment, maximum weight of type A-I school bus increased and seat back and tailpipe equipment standards modified.

HF1857-Pelowski (DFL)**State & Local Government
Operations Reform, Technology
& Elections**

Notice by electronic mail authorized.

HF1858-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Criminal record expungement law recodified and restructured and expungement eligibility expanded.

HF1859-Bigham (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Board of Private Detective and Protective Agent Services merged with the Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training.

HF1860-Ruud (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

Lasers, intense pulsed light devices and radio frequency devices regulated.

HF1861-Champion (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Shubert Center funding provided.

HF1862-Bly (DFL)**Energy Finance & Policy Division**

Distributed generation cooperative formation authorized.

HF1863-Bly (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Solid waste disposal facility fee exempted.

HF1864-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Hibbing; street reconstruction funding provided.

HF1865-Gottwalt (R)**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

MinnesotaCare service provision modified, healthy Minnesota plan requirements established and healthy Minnesota accounts established for MinnesotaCare enrollees.

HF1866-Sertich (DFL)**Finance**

Hibbing; city public library funding provided.

HF1867-Anderson, S. (R)**Finance**

Interstate Highway 494 additional lane funding provided.

HF1868-Mullery (DFL)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Parents or guardians allowed to designate a person to attend a school conference.

HF1869-Faust (DFL)**Finance**

Entrepreneurship and technology business incubator funding provided.

HF1870-Dettmer (R)**Civil Justice**

Marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in Minnesota, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1871-Drazkowski (R)**Civil Justice**

Marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in Minnesota, and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1872-Zellers (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Minnesota Unlawful Trade Practices Act, Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act, Prevention of Consumer Fraud Act, and False Statement in Advertisement Act provided and private remedies modified.

HF1873-Lillie (DFL)**Finance**

State trail rehabilitation funding provided.

HF1874-Drazkowski (R)**Taxes**

Property tax refund provisions modified.

HF1875-McNamara (R)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Environmental review requirements modified, certain projects exempted that are subject to standards from environmental review and project proposers required to prepare environmental impact statements and environmental assessment worksheets.

HF1876-Lesch (DFL)**Civil Justice**

Employment and training data regulated, data classified and terms defined.

HF1877-Hackbarth (R)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Analysis required for state air quality, hazardous waste and water quality standards.

HF1878-Smith (R)**Taxes**

Medina; tax increment financing district time extension authorized.

HF1879-Smith (R)**Taxes**

Mound; tax increment financing provisions modified.

HF1880-Severson (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Interview required for veterans listed as meeting minimum qualifications and claiming veteran's preference for positions of state government employment, state civil service applied to removal provisions in current local government law and report required of certain state employment statistics pertaining to veterans.

HF1881-Hackbarth (R)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Hunters', anglers', and trappers' bill of rights established, right to arms and the right to wear fur and display game protected, hunting and fishing access ensured, program established to allow public walk-in access on private property, money appropriated and constitutional amendment proposed.

HF1882-Winkler (DFL)**State & Local Government
Operations Reform, Technology
& Elections**

Legislative day definition modified.

HF1883-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Maximum limit on state agricultural society's bonded debt and the sunset on the authority to issue bonds eliminated, authorized investments of debt service funds modified and notification of the commissioner of finance required.

HF1884-Anderson, S. (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Designation of state land required for use by veterans.

HF1885-Dittrich (DFL)**Taxes**

Coon Rapids; compensation for final city aid base payment.

HF1886-Juhnke (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Feeding Minnesota Task Force established.

HF1887-Mullery (DFL)**Housing Finance & Policy & Public Health Finance Division**

Rehabilitation of vacant and abandoned housing due to foreclosure crisis provided; health, safety and welfare of the community protected through appropriate police powers; and legal process provided to appoint receivers for abandoned properties and recovery of funds expended to bring property up to code.

HF1888-Mullery (DFL)**Finance**

Economic development definitions amended and money appropriated.

Thursday, March 19

HF1889-Thissen (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Public employees authorized to buy into the state long-term care insurance program.

HF1890-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Nursing home moratorium exception projects approval period extended and additional moratorium exceptions authorized.

HF1891-Johnson (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

State agencies required to develop policies regarding telecommuting by state employees.

HF1892-Johnson (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Supervisory employee definition modified.

HF1893-Carlson (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Retirement incentives authorized.

HF1894-Loeffler (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Classified employees duties and rights specified.

HF1895-Doty (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Morrison County; county treasurer office appointment process provided.

HF1896-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Alcohol health and judicial impact fund established and impact fee imposed.

HF1897-Masin (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Dakota County; Metropolitan Council conveyance of land and buildings required.

HF1898-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Local transit planning and development provisions modified and financial assistance for public transit providers provided.

HF1899-Gottwalt (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Prevailing wage suspension provided during certain budget deficits.

HF1900-Jackson (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Mille Lacs County; Rum River area land removed from the wild and scenic rivers program.

HF1901-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota youth program funding provided.

HF1902-Davids (R)**Taxes**

Sales and use tax exemption provided for items given away.

HF1903-Davids (R)**Finance**

Disaster readiness and recovery efforts grants provided.

HF1904-Severson (R)**Finance**

Correctional discharge planning funding provided.

HF1905-Gunther (R)**Finance**

Entrepreneurial and small business assistance grants provided.

HF1906-Loeffler (DFL)**Taxes**

New non-agricultural relative homesteads prohibited and residential rental property class rates reduced.

HF1907-Severson (R)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Elections recount procedures modified and certain verification programs required.

HF1908-Zellers (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Insurance industry trade practices regulated and loss experience data reporting regulated.

HF1909-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Positive abortion alternatives base funding increased.

HF1910-Davids (R)**Finance**

Outdoor heritage, clean water, parks and trails, and arts and cultural heritage sales tax debt management guideline application specified.

HF1911-Eastlund (R)**Civil Justice**

Passport restriction denial withdrawal based on child support arrearages prohibited.

HF1912-Eastlund (R)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Suspension of registrations or licenses of off-highway motorcycles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and watercraft authorized in case of payment by dishonored checks

HF1913-Davnie (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County; solid and hazardous waste fund uses authorized.

HF1914-Hilty (DFL)**Finance**

Commissioner of commerce authorized to prepare and plan for receipt of federal stimulus money for investment in energy conservation and efficiency broadband deployment.

HF1915-Hilty (DFL)**Finance**

Federal stimulus funding allocated for residential energy conservation.

HF1916-Olin (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Fire protection and first responder services advisory task force established.

HF1917-Davnie (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Exclusive liquor store wine tasting provision modified.

HF1918-Hornstein (DFL)**Finance**

Commissioner of transportation duties and powers prescribed and report required.

HF1919-Thao (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare and general assistance medical care coverage of chiropractic services modified.

HF1920-Liebling (DFL)**Finance**

Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission funding provided.

HF1921-Falk (DFL)**Finance**

Benson; well funding provided.

HF1922-Falk (DFL)**Finance**

Benson; well funding provided.

HF1923-Sailer (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Clearwater County Memorial Hospital's inclusion in Public Employees Retirement Association filing date extended.

HF1924-Champion (DFL)**Finance**

Certificates of good conduct established, certificate effects described and eligibility provided.

HF1925-Kiffmeyer (R)**Taxes**

Green Acres Law 2008 changes repealed and appointments provided.

HF1926-Clark (DFL)**Finance**

Restorative justice program funding provided.

HF1927-Anderson, S. (R)**Taxes**

Leased seasonal-recreational land exempted.

HF1928-Hansen (DFL)**Finance**

High-resolution digital elevation data funding provided.

HF1929-Bunn (DFL)**State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Bayport; Public Employees Retirement Association annuity repayment requirement waived for a certain independent contractor.

HF1930-Holberg (R)**Civil Justice**

Business screening service regulation amended.

HF1931-Falk (DFL)**Finance**

Hendricks; Ivanhoe; ISD 402 and 403 energy improvement grant provided for Lincoln High School.

HF1932-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Finance**

Summer scientific research program for students higher education institution grant provided.

HF1933-Champion (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Ex-criminal offenders now in the community pilot project established to provide services and report required.

HF1934-Champion (DFL)**Finance**

Federal stimulus fund principles established for allocation and expenditure.

HF1935-Murphy, E. (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

MinnesotaCare and Medical Assistance consolidated, enrollment and eligibility procedures streamlined.

HF1936-Juhnke (DFL)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Star farm program established, Star farm board established and money appropriated from the clean water fund.

HF1937-Masin (DFL)**Taxes**

Meals served at certain residential facilities exemption expanded.

HF1938-Poppe (DFL)**Taxes**

Construction materials and equipment used to construct the Mower County courts facility exempted, and an obsolete provision removed.

HF1939-Kahn (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County; Midtown Greenway trail wayfinding signage and kiosk funding provided.

HF1940-Brod (R)**Agriculture, Rural Economies & Veterans Affairs**

Dependent returning from active military duty permitted to enroll as a dependent in the state employee group insurance program regardless of status as a full-time student.

HF1941-Brynaert (DFL)**Finance**

Extended employment service extended for persons with disabilities, purpose and need for extended employment established, and money appropriated.

HF1942-Urdahl (R)**Civil Justice**

Minnesota divorce reconciliation project established, portion of the marriage license fee redirected and participation in a marriage dissolution education program required before commencing marriage dissolution proceedings involving minor children.

HF1943-Loeffler (DFL)**Finance**

Hennepin County; riparian restoration and stream bank stabilization funding provided.

HF1944-Hosch (DFL)**Finance**

Minnesota Family Investment Program supported work funding provided.

HF1945-Masin (DFL)**Taxes**

Eagan; tax increment financing district activity duration and time extended, and adjustments to original net tax capacity established.

HF1946-Seifert (R)**Commerce & Labor**

Redwood County; limited exemption from state building code provided.

HF1947-Lesch (DFL)**Public Safety Policy & Oversight**

Statewide Minnesota prescription program established and use of tamper-resistant prescription drug forms required.

HF1948-Haws (DFL)**Finance**

Investment fund established for eligible organization and loans authorized.

HF1949-Dittrich (DFL)**Taxes**

Coon Rapids; tax increment financing districts extended.

HF1950-Kahn (DFL)**Finance**

Digital radio conversion funding provided.

HF1951-Kahn (DFL)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

In vitro fertilization therapy or gamete donation information required to be provided to patients.

HF1952-Abeler (R)**Finance**

Hearing aid dispenser fees limited.

HF1953-Slocum (DFL)**State & Local Government****Operations Reform, Technology & Elections**

Metropolitan area local government permitted to impose reasonable area or response time residency requirements for job-related reasons.

HF1954-Nornes (R)**Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight**

Dentists exempted from certain electronic transaction requirements.

HF1955-Holberg (R)**Finance**

Temporary transfers authorized from the metropolitan livable communities fund accounts and the right-of-way loan acquisition fund for transit operating deficits; funding sources modified for metropolitan livable communities fund accounts.

HF1956-Loon (R)**Transportation & Transit Policy & Oversight Division**

Hybrid vehicles temporarily allowed to be used toll-free and on high-occupancy vehicle lanes.

HF1957-Mack (R)**K-12 Education Policy & Oversight**

Charter school students allowed to participate in extracurricular activities in their resident school district.

HF1958-Juhnke (DFL)**Environment Policy & Oversight**

Certain rulemaking authority modified, study required, legislative oversight provided and appointments provided.

HF1959-Bunn (DFL)**Commerce & Labor**

Minimum wage standards regulated for tipped employees.

LATE ACTION

Education is DFL budget priority

The preschoolers through college-age students surrounding House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Mpls) were the backdrop to emphasize the House DFL's commitment to education in their 2010-2011 budget proposal.

"Our priorities are crystal clear," Majority Leader Tony Sertich (DFL-Chisholm) said during a March 19 press conference to announce their plan to solve the \$4.6 billion deficit over the 2010-2011 biennium, and the caucus's spending priorities.

Under the proposal, early education through postsecondary would not see cuts to their budgets.

"We must maintain our commitment to

the next generation, and solve our problems boldly and honestly," Sertich said.

Other state programs are not held harmless, under the budget proposal. In what Kelliher termed "shared sacrifice," more than \$1.6 billion in cuts are proposed to state programming. Although, she pointed out, some of cuts would be mitigated by use of one-time money from the federal stimulus funds, formally known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The budget also calls for \$1.5 billion in new revenue. Kelliher said the tax committees would be coming forward with recommendations, including a "bold" proposal next week from the House Property and Local Sales Tax Division and chairman Rep. Paul Marquart (DFL-Dilworth).

As with Gov. Tim Pawlenty's revised budget plan released early in the week, the

DFLers call for a shift, or as Kelliher termed it, a "delay in payment" of state money to schools — a budgeting mechanism that has often been used during deficit times. During this biennium, it would amount to about \$1.77 billion. They also propose a reserve increase of \$250 million for the biennium.

House Minority Leader Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) called the DFLs new revenue plan a sure way to drive jobs out of the state. He referenced the just released state jobless numbers showing the level at 8.1 percent in February, and said the only way the state can move forward is through job creation.

Seifert said his caucus is firmly behind the governor's budget plan that calls for no new taxes. He promised solidarity to uphold any veto the governor has promised regarding tax increases.

— L. SCHUTZ

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MAJORITY LEADER: ANTHONY "TONY" SERTICH

MINORITY LEADER: MARTY SEIFERT

MINNESOTA INDEX

Keeping Minnesotans safe

Billions of miles traveled on state roadways in 2007.....	57
Year the Minnesota State Patrol was established.....	1929
Number of current full-time equivalent state patrol positions.....	877
Number of sworn state troopers	530
Millions of miles traveled by troopers in 2007	15.5
Enforcement contacts in 2007	578,211
DWI arrests by troopers in 2007	6,495
In 2002	5,855
In 1997	5,469
Approximate gallons of gas used by the patrol each year, in millions.....	1
State patrol operating budget for fiscal year 2009, in millions.....	\$82.4
State patrol cruisers rear-ended between Dec. 1, 2008, and Jan. 20, 2009	26
Property damage crashes that troopers responded to during the four-day Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend from 6 a.m. Jan. 16, 2009, to 6 a.m. Jan. 20, 2009.....	618
Number of those that were rollovers.....	214
Personal injury, fatal crashes responded to in the four-day period	127, 2
Percent of Minnesotans who used seat belts in 2007.....	88
Percent in 1997	65
School bus safety inspections performed by the state patrol in 2007	14,499
State patrol canine teams around the state	12
Reconstruction specialists with the state patrol	34
Hours of work for average reconstruction.....	40
Fire departments in Minnesota in 2007	788
Year the State Fire Marshal Division was created.....	1905
Estimated inspections done in 2008 by the division	3,500
Inspections in 2007	3,290
State, federal violations found in 2007 inspections	12,161, 1,841
Estimated number of day care inspections per year.....	1,500
Number of full-time inspectors in 2008	18
Fire scenes in 2007 where division arson investigators were called.....	414
Of those, number determined to be arson.....	96
Millions in total property loss	\$9.3
Cigarette brand styles certified by the division to be sold as fire-standard compliant in Minnesota.....	798
Miles of pipeline in the state that are inspected by the state's dozen inspectors	65,000

—M. Cook

Sources: Testimony Jan. 20 before the House Transportation Finance and Policy Divisions and Feb. 10 before the House Public Safety Finance Division; 2010-2011 biennial budget documents; Minnesota State Patrol 2009 Legislative Fact Sheet; Office of Pipeline Safety.

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