



Senator Wiger's Legislative Update

APRIL 30, 2009

Maplewood, North St. Paul, Oakdale

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

Senator Wiger's Committee Involvement

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

Conference Committees Prepare to Resolve Budget and Programs

Dear Friends,

The legislature is scheduled to adjourn by May 18. Recently the Senate and House each passed numerous bills addressing the state's budget and revenue. There are some major differences in the respective bills and in the proposals from the Governor. House and Senate leaders and the Governor will now focus on resolving differences in conference committees. I will be serving on the E-12 Education Conference Committee.

Following is a short summary of the budget bills passed by the Senate. These proposals need to be reconciled with House proposals and then signed by the Governor before becoming law. For updates please contact my office or Senate Information at 651-296-0504. This report also includes updates on various local matters and items of interest. As always, please call, write, or send an email to share your thoughts.



Senate Budget Bills

E-12 Education (SF 1328)

Faced with a historic \$6.4 billion deficit, the Senate passed an education funding bill that provides school districts with stable and reliable funding into the future, and also helps balance the state's budget for the next four years. The Senate bill reduces education funding by 3.3%. Other state budgets are being reduced by 7%, however federal stimulus dollars helped buffer education budget reductions. Suspending some state mandates for the next two years will also help school

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

districts weather this economic storm.

Other major components of the bill include increases for early childhood education, charter school accountability and reform measures, statewide testing changes, and streamlined special education mandates and rules.

Higher Education (SF 2083)

The Senate's Higher Education Bill offsets needed cuts to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) with new federal stimulus funding. The bill asks MnSCU to assess labor market data when conducting college program reviews, and work to ensure they are only enrolling as many students in a technical or occupational program as can be supported by the regional labor market. Also included in the bill is language encouraging higher education institutions to establish research based high school to college developmental transition programs. The goal is to provide students with instruction to develop the skills and abilities they need to be ready for college-level courses.

Health and Human Services (SF 695)

On April 27 the Senate passed the Health and Human Services Finance Bill which rejects sweeping cuts to key health care programs. The Senate plan:

- Initiates efficiencies and improved outcomes, such as encouraging the use of less costly institutional care. Maintains basic health care services (such as dental care) with some modifications to increase efficiencies.
- Maintains the Health Care Access Fund as a separate dedicated fund to pay for health care. Increases health care access for more than 20,000 children through a "Cover All Kids" proposal.
- Makes no cuts to health care eligibility for adults or children, including preserving MinnesotaCare access for the thousands who depend on the program for affordable health care coverage.

Public Safety (SF 993)

The Senate approved a Public Safety Budget Bill that uses the state's budget deficit as an opportunity to bring needed reform to the state's criminal justice system. Statistics show Minnesota has one of the fastest-growing prison populations in the country and that fact couldn't be ignored when looking at ways to control state spending. The bill includes a provision allowing courts to include pets and companion animals in domestic abuse orders for protection.

Agriculture and Veterans Affairs (SF 1779)

The Senate's Omnibus Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Finance Bill reduces overall state spending while sparing programs that serve Minnesota's veterans and prioritizing funding towards important agriculture programs. The bill includes:

- Increased funding for ongoing homeless veterans outreach efforts by the Minnesota Assistance Counsel for Veterans.
- A proposed task force to find the most effective way they could benefit food banks in the state. The Feeding Minnesota Task Force will be asked to study the best way for Minnesota's farmers to donate food after harvest, and what the barriers are between them and donation.

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

Environment, Energy and Natural Resources (SF 2099)

The Senate's Omnibus Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Finance Bill includes two-year budgets for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Minnesota Zoo, the Science Museum, part of the Department of Commerce, and others. While the bill cuts overall spending in these areas, it also establishes a competitive grant program to help local governments reduce their waste costs, authorizes the Department of Health to designate as "high priority" certain chemicals that are found to be potentially harmful to health or the environment, and directs the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to set up a system for reporting and maintaining an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions.

Taxes (SF 2074)

On April 24 the Senate passed the Omnibus Tax Bill which restores tax fairness for working Minnesotans, protects property taxpayers, and grows jobs so we can help people get back to work. Right now, the middle class is paying a higher percentage of their income in taxes than the wealthiest people in the state. Our bill creates a fourth tax bracket so working families can stop paying more than our wealthiest residents. The bill returns tax rates closer to the 1998 level and before the Ventura income tax cuts.

The Senate bill does not remove the mortgage interest deduction nor does it increase taxes for alcohol or cigarettes. Additionally, the bill preserves property tax refund programs for homeowners and renters and protects property taxpayers from higher increases than they would experience under the Governor's tax plan.

Transportation (SF 1276)

Most transportation funding comes from dedicated sources of revenue that cannot be used for balancing the state's \$6.4 billion budget deficit. However, the General Fund portions of the Transportation Division's budget – transit – were subject to the Senate's 7% reduction target in its bill. This amounted to a proportional \$12 million cut for Metro Transit and a \$2.8 million cut to Greater Minnesota transit for 2010-2011.

Judiciary (SF 1627)

The Judiciary Budget Bill provides funding for the state courts, public defenders, and other judiciary related state agencies. The bill achieves a 7% base budget reduction to these agencies through a variety of policy changes aimed at streamlining court processes by keeping less serious crimes out of court and ensuring that our courts can focus on the most serious criminals and see that they are punished for the crimes they commit. The bill also gives the Judicial Council the authority to raise approximately \$34 million in increased fees.

State Government (SF 2082)

Nearly every state government received a significant budget cut in the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill. The legislation cuts 5% or more from most state agencies including: a \$6.8 million reduction for the Minnesota Legislature, a \$2.4 million cut from the Attorney General's office, a \$7 million cut from the Office of Enterprise Technology, and an \$8.2 million cut from the Department of Revenue.

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

Senator Chuck Wiger and Representative Nora Slawik met with Tartan High School French students on April 21 at the Capitol.



Maplewood Projects

Upgrades to White Bear Avenue

Ramsey County, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), and the City of Maplewood, is proposing to reconstruct White Bear Avenue from Radatz Avenue to County Road D including a portion of County Road D west of White Bear Avenue.

The County Road D improvements have been selected by the Metropolitan Council as one of five projects to receive stimulus funding! The project is expected to be awarded approximately \$2.6 million in stimulus funding sometime in May or June, with construction to begin in July.

Maplewood is proceeding with the design and right of way and has contacted property owners. The preliminary layout for County Road D shows the proposed improvements which include roadway reconstruction to a four-lane divided section with additional turn lanes and intersection upgrades. This portion of the project should be completed in 2010.

The White Bear Avenue improvements are currently scheduled for construction in 2010, with project completion occurring in 2011. The preliminary layout for White Bear Avenue shows the proposed improvements which include the reconstruction of the roadway from a four-lane divided section to a six-lane divided section with additional turn lanes and intersection upgrades. For more information visit <http://www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/index.asp?NID=419>.

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

Rice Street (Highway 36) Interchange

In 2008 I sponsored legislation resulting in a \$2 million appropriation for the design of a new interchange that would improve the congestion between St. Jude's medical facilities and campus. St. Jude has indicated that they will invest in a campus expansion involving up to 1,000 new medical technology jobs in the next five years if this interchange is upgraded. The project could be ready for construction as early as April 2010 or whenever funding is available. Unfortunately the project was not selected for stimulus funding, but is submitting an application for federal funding through the Metropolitan Council.

Ramsey County has finished the phase one environmental audit as well as the intersection control report. The recommended design, or layout, has been reviewed by stakeholders and has received positive feedback. Accordingly, the layout has been forwarded to Mn/DOT for a stringent review process. In the meantime, a Request for Proposal has been offered for the final design and right of way acquisition and are both due May 13. Project stakeholders include Maplewood, Roseville, Little Canada, St. Jude Medical, Ramsey County, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Stillwater Road Improvements

Trail and drainage improvements along the south side of Stillwater Road between Lakewood Drive and Century Avenue have been identified and recommended by Mn/DOT for possible economic stimulus funding for construction in 2009. The Stillwater Road Project is called an "Enhancement Project" and will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Council later this month to determine if it will be included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). In anticipation of securing funding for these improvements, the Maplewood City Council authorized the preparation of a feasibility report for the project. The City has hired a consultant, Kimley-Horn and Associates, to assist in the preparation of the report.

Unfortunately, Maplewood did not receive a grant from the Safe Routes to School program with Mn/DOT. Apparently the project was not approved because the proposal didn't meet design standards. Specifically, the design standards require the width of the trail to be 8 feet at all times, but, because of the location of the utility overhead poles, that wasn't possible in all places along the trail. If the project does not receive stimulus funds, it is likely that the design will be revised to meet Safe Routes to School application standards for next year.

Representative Slawik and I have had several meetings with Stillwater Road residents about this project. I commend John O'Phelan, Mark Anderson and their neighbors for their hard work and dedication to improve Stillwater Road.

North St. Paul Projects

North St. Paul Redevelopment (SF 1427/HF 1787)

This proposal, sponsored by Representative Lillie and I, would extend North St. Paul's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district from five to ten years for two districts, Old City Hall and Charles Street. The extension is needed because the economic slowdown has delayed redevelopment opportunities. The added time will allow North St. Paul the flexibility to assure appropriate developments occur and to recover costs associated with demolition and preparation of the sites.

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

This legislation was heard by the Senate Taxes Committee on March 26 and was recommended to be laid over for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. As recommended, this legislation is part of the Senate Omnibus Tax Bill (SF 2074), which was approved by the full Senate last Friday. The House Taxes Committee heard the proposal on April 3 and, as recommended, the legislation is included in the House Omnibus Tax Bill (HF 2323). Thanks to Wally Wysopal, North St. Paul City Manager, for attending the Senate hearing and testifying on behalf of the proposal.

Municipal Power Agency Legislation (SF 896/HF 951)

As a member of the Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MMPA), North St. Paul officials support a law which permits municipal power agencies, in addition to cities, to be members of municipal power agencies. This legislation, sponsored by Representative Lillie and I, was passed by the Senate and House and signed into law by Governor Pawlenty. The legislation became effective April 17, 2009.

The change permits existing municipal power agencies to join with other municipal power agencies or cities to form new municipal power agencies. By joining with other agencies and cities to form a new agency, existing agencies would be able to construct and operate larger projects which would otherwise exceed the needs of any one agency in any year.

This would be helpful to the agencies in meeting their renewable energy objectives in a timely and cost-effective manner, and in more effectively matching new capacity with load growth. By allowing existing agencies to join together to form new agencies, the amendment would enhance the ability of such agencies to secure an adequate, economical and reliable supply of energy for their member cities.

Gateway Trail Crossing at Highway 120

This project, located just south of the intersection of Highway 36 and Highway 120, will make the area safer for all Gateway Trail Users. Representative Lillie and I sponsored legislation last session that allocated \$650,000 for an at-grade crossing, which allows for the flexibility of constructing a bridge or tunnel. Since the weather has warmed some, Mn/DOT has been able to complete some preliminary drilling to look at water tables and soil conditions. Water was found 6-7 feet below ground so Mn/DOT will proceed with a bridge design.

The Department of Transportation has included the construction of a bridge at the Gateway State Trail Crossing at Highway 120 in a list of projects under consideration to receive funds from the economic stimulus package. A request has been made for stimulus funding in the amount of \$1,250,000. According to Mn/DOT officials, the project scored high in the enhancements category and is expected to receive funding. Although the funding hasn't been formally approved, an announcement could happen in the next few weeks.

Silver Lake (also located in Maplewood and Oakdale)

Earlier this year Representative Lillie and I met with a large group of Silver Lake stakeholders to discuss both treatment and funding options for Silver Lake. Stakeholders include the Silver Lake Improvement Association (SLIA), North St. Paul and Maplewood Officials, Ramsey County, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Valley Branch Watershed District, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and Aquatic Engineering.

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division
- Senate Finance
Committee
- Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division
- Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee
- Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States
- Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee

On April 28th 57 acres of Silver Lake were treated for curlyleaf pondweed. The treatment reportedly went well and occurred before the temperature of the lake reached 60 degrees Fahrenheit. The DNR supports treating the lake for early season control of curlyleaf pondweed, which may benefit water quality and is unlikely to extensively reduce native vegetation, instead of Eurasian watermilfoil, which is unlikely to benefit water quality and may reduce native vegetation.

In March the DNR approved SLIA for a grant of \$10,000 to support a pilot project. However, the cost of the treatment is around \$36,000 so additional funding will be needed from other sources. Funding requests are in the process of being reviewed and approved by North St. Paul, Maplewood and the Valley Branch Watershed District.

Valley Branch Watershed District will be increasing their monitoring, both chemical and biological, of Silver lake as the water quality has decreased significantly in past years.

Senator Wiger met with Erica Brewinski and Peggy White, graduate students pursuing their K-12 principal licensure. Peggy is a Maplewood resident and fourth grade teacher at Oakdale Elementary.



Oakdale Projects

Oakdale Redevelopment Projects (SF 151/HF 102)

Last month the Senate and House Tax Committees heard legislation sponsored by Representative Slawik and I that makes a technical correction to the tax increment financing bill passed last year (SF 2388). The correction adds the parcel identification numbers for Oakdale Mall to the previous legislation, which will allow for the property to be redeveloped.

Both the Senate and House Tax Committees recommended that the bill be passed

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

and laid over for inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. As recommended, this proposal is included in the Senate Omnibus Tax Bill (SF 2074), which was passed by the Senate last Friday, and the House Omnibus Tax Bill (HF 2323), which was passed by the House last Saturday. Thanks to City Administrator Craig Waldron and Community Development Director Bob Streetar who both testified on behalf of the proposal.

The redevelopment efforts will promote economic activity, create jobs, upgrade housing, encourage mixed use development, and support trail connections and other recreational assets. These projects will also remove blighted areas and buffer incompatible land uses. Oakdale officials have completed an extensive study of the community's redevelopment needs. The city has identified the following sites as priorities: Oakdale Mall, Tanners Lake, First Student Bus Garage, Fleet Farm Parcel/29 Pines Manufactured Home Park and the Winner Gas Station Site.

Plan Update for Former 3M Disposal Site

In the late 1940s to 1960, 3M and other companies sent industrial waste to a disposal site near Highway 5 between Hadley and Granada Avenues. Recently, perfluorochemicals (or PFCs) were discovered at the site, which were previously used by 3M to make a variety of products. Under an agreement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), 3M has committed to doing additional work at the site to contain and remove the PFCs from the site.

In February 3M submitted a Remedial Design/Response Action Plan to the MPCA that will provide a design, implementation schedule and monitoring plan for the response actions identified in the Minnesota Decision Document (or recommended remedy). Upon implementation, the response actions will protect the public health and welfare and the environment from the release or threatened releases of PFCs at or from the site. The response actions to be implemented by 3M include:

- Site-wide institutional controls, access restriction and ground water monitoring
- An enhanced ground water recovery system with pretreatment of contaminated ground water prior to discharge to sanitary sewer
- Excavation of contaminated soil, the amount of which is specified in the selected remedy, and disposal at the SKB Rosemount Industrial Waste Facility.

For more information visit www.3M.com/pfos-pfoa. If you have questions, feel free to call Bill Nelson, 3M Corporate Communications, at 651-733-6516 or Jim Kotsmith, 3M Corporate Environmental Programs, at 651-737-3635. You can also email them at eastmetroresponse@mmm.com.

Update on Selected 2009 Education Initiatives

GRAD Test (SF 405/HF 501)

Over the past months, a joint Senate and House working group, which I am a part of, has been meeting with the Minnesota Department of Education to develop a short term solution to address concerns raised over the implementation of the Graduation Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) and a long term solution to ensure our students are college and career ready when graduating from high school.

Language I had introduced in SF 405 has been included in the Senate Education Omnibus bill (SF 1328). Specifically, this legislation will allow students enrolled in

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

grade 8 in the 2005-2006 school year through the 2009-2010 school year who do not pass the state graduation-required assessment for diploma in mathematics, shall receive a passing state notation if they:

- 1) Complete with a passing score or grade all state and local coursework and credits required for graduation by the school board granting the student their diploma;
- 2) Participate in the district-prescribed academic remediation in mathematics; and
- 3) Fully participate in at least two retest attempts in mathematics after the initial spring administration of the mathematics graduation-required assessment for diploma.

Compulsory Attendance Age (SF 19/HF 314)

This bill requires every child between seven and eighteen years of age to attend school until they have completed the requirements for graduation. This requirement would go into effect for the 2012-2013 school year. Staying in school is critical to academic and long-term success. If we set high expectations, our students will follow that lead. The student drop out rate affects all of us, not just the student who drops out. There are serious social and economic consequences for our state if we don't address drop out rates now.

This bill was passed by the House K-12 Education Policy and Oversight Committee on February 18. It is hoped that the provisions will be adopted by the Senate House Education Policy and Finance Conference Committee.

P-20 Education Partnership (SF 21/HF 106)

This proposal creates a seamless system of education that maximizes achievements of all students, from early childhood through elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, while promoting the efficient use of financial and human resources. The partnership would consist of major statewide educational groups or constituencies with a stated interest in P-20 education. Partnership members would develop recommendations to the governor and legislature designed to maximize the achievement of all P-20 students while promoting the efficient use of state resources.

This bill passed both the Senate Higher Education Committee and the Senate State and Local Government Committee in March and is included in the Higher Education Omnibus Bill (SF 2083).

Permanent School Fund Advisory Committee

The Permanent School Fund Advisory Committee (PSFAC), of which I am the chair in the Senate, advises the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the management of permanent school fund land. The advisory committee is also responsible for recommending changes to statute, policy, and implementation to ensure provident utilization of school fund lands. PSFAC members come from a variety of areas and include District 622 Superintendent Patty Phillips.

The Sale & Exchange of Property and Boundary Waters Canoe Area Subcommittee and the Forest Management Subcommittee will each be meeting May 5 for a presentation and to discuss land management issues. The Climate & Energy Subcommittee will meet on May 7. Subcommittee members will provide the PSFAC with recommendations on the management of school trust lands in order to secure

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn

75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division
- Senate Finance
Committee
- Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division
- Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee
- Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States
- Member,
National
Conference
of State
Legislatures
Education
Committee

the long-term economic return for the permanent school fund. The PSFAC will meet again in June to discuss the findings and progress of the sub-committees.

For more information visit:

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/legislativeinfo/school_lands/index.html.

Update on Other Legislative Initiatives

Homeowner's Insurance (SF 404/HF 1041)

Representative Lillie and I sponsored a bill that would require a notice to be provided to applicants for homeowners' insurance indicating that their coverage may be canceled within the first 60 days of it being issued. Insurance companies have up to 60 days after the policy start date to do underwriting in which they can require homeowners to correct elements of their property that would make it uninsurable. If the homeowners do not make the required corrections, their insurance may be canceled.

This proposal was developed in response to a constituent who experienced complications with her homeowner's insurance as she was not made aware of policy requirements until after the policy was purchased. A notice is typically provided to applicants in their insurance policy, but many applicants do not receive a copy of their policy at the time of application, especially if the application is submitted online or over the phone, as is becoming more common. An insurance agent should tell an applicant that their policy can be canceled, but that does not always happen.

This bill was heard by the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee and was passed by the full Senate in March.

POW/MIA Resolution (SF 18/HF 303)

Several area veterans have met with Representative Lillie and I to discuss and prepare a resolution calling for the United States Congress to appoint an independent counsel to investigate the Prisoner of War – Missing in Action issue. There are many reasons this resolution is needed:

- There are a total of 88,115 service men and women unaccounted for from a number of conflicts.
- There is a lack of enforcement for POW/MIA executive orders and directives.
- There is a lack of accountability for the POW/MIA effort, specifically with the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO).

This bill was heard in and passed the House Veterans Affairs Division as well as the full House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Committee. The Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee passed the bill March 3. Many thanks to local Commander Larry Ryan (American Legion Post 39), State VFW Commander Stan Kowalski and Rich Daly, Executive Director of Minnesota Won't Forget POW/MIA who all testified on behalf of the bill.

Creative Freedom Act (SF 687/HF 907)

Championed by North St. Paul constituent Bob Nepper, the Creative Freedom Act

**State Senator
Charles "Chuck"
Wiger
District 55**

**651.296.6820
sen.chuck.wiger@
senate.mn**

**75 Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Capitol Room
323
St. Paul, MN 55155**

**Senator Wiger's
Committee
Involvement**

- *Deputy Chair,
E-12 Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Senate Finance
Committee*
- *Higher Education
Budget and
Policy Division*
- *Chair,
Permanent
School Fund
Advisory
Committee*
- *Commissioner,
Education
Commission of
the States*
- *Member,
National
Conference of
State
Legislatures
Education
Committee*

provides for the forfeiture of employer rights in employee invention agreements, imposes a time limit for employer development or utilization of and investment in an invention or proposal, and authorizes employees acquiring the rights and interest after employer forfeiture to transfer the interest. This legislation will assist employees in obtaining the rights to the proposals and inventions they develop that their employer is not using or has no intention of developing.

Charitable Gambling

I have co-authored legislation that will provide for assistance for service organizations like the American Legion and VFW. These organizations have expressed a strong need for assistance as the revenue they generate has decreased and caused economic hardship and reduced capacity for charitable giving.

Lawful Gambling Taxes Modifications (SF 1874/HF 1406)

This bill will:

- Modify the gambling tax gambling product definition to include bingo paper sheet facsimiles and modifying gross receipts to exclude rental proceeds and certain organization owned premises
- Increase the gambling tax imposed and removing the exclusion for pull-tab and tipboard deals and certain gross receipts and allow local investigation fees and local gambling taxes
- Impose the gambling tax on licensed organizations and exempt organizations and distributors and expand conditions for refund of taxes paid to organizations with gross receipts under a certain amount
- Modify lawful gambling exemption requirements by requiring organizations to report to commissioner of revenue and modify tax collection and requiring monthly regulatory fee deposit in the lawful gambling regulation account
- Repeal gambling pull-tab and tipboard taxes, combined receipts tax and tax refund on unplayed or defective pull-tabs or tipboards, gross profits refunds and credits and tax refund or credit

Electronic Bingo Authorization and Pull-tab Dispensing Devices Modifications (SF 1874/HF 1406)

This bill will:

- Modify certain definitions regarding electronic bingo occasions, devices, portable electronic bingo devices and linked bingo
- Eliminate a gambling control board requirement to limit pull-tab use and a provision for pull-tab sales in off-sale liquor stores
- Allow organizations to lease gambling equipment from linked bingo game providers
- Modify conduct of bingo to conform to electronic bingo and prohibit bingo hard cards in bar bingo
- Require licensing for stationary electronic bingo devices and modify limits for linked bingo games played on stationary devices

