

LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS

On January 6th, the MN Legislature began the 89th legislative session with a politically divided legislature for the first time since 2006. As expected, Representative Kurt Daudt was elected House Speaker and will lead the Republican majority in the House. Majority Leader Senator Tom Bakk will continue to lead a Democrat majority in the Senate.

This first year of the session is considered the “budget session,” and legislators are primarily tasked with setting the two-year state budget for the biennium that begins July 1, 2015. The divided legislature will have to work with democratic Governor Mark Dayton to pass a budget, bonding bill, and manage the state’s approximately \$1 billion budget surplus.

The governor and legislative leaders will also soon begin to lay out their policy agendas for the next biennium. Transportation and education have stood out as areas of emphasis for all. Governor Dayton has expressed his support for investing a large portion of the projected surplus in K-12 and early education. He has also expressed interested in a gas tax increase to fund a portion of a 10-year investment in the state’s transportation infrastructure. Republican leaders have been generally unwilling to use a gas tax increase to fund these investments, but have agreed that investing in roads and bridges should be a top legislative priority.

Adding to the excitement of the session, large portions of the Minnesota State Capitol are under construction as part of a \$272 million restoration project and the new Senate Office Building is not expected to be complete under December 2015. As a result, the 2015 legislative session is expected to be a bit chaotic. There is a reduction in the number of available committee rooms, which has already required adjustments to standing committee schedules.

For more information on the House and Senate Committees and Committee Schedules, follow the links below.

House Committee Roster: <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/leginfo/comroster.pdf>

House Committee Schedule: <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/11comgrid.pdf>

Senate Committee Roster: <http://www.senate.mn/bin/showPDF.php?pdffile=/committees/2015-2016/info/comlegal.pdf>

Senate Committee Schedule: http://www.senate.mn/committees/cmte_meeting_schedule.php?ls=

SENATE DFL PRESS CONFERENCE

On Thursday, the Senate DFL held a press conference to introduce the Senate’s first six bills of session.

Amongst these bills included a piece of legislation that would provide tuition relief for certain graduating seniors attending community or technical colleges. The bill, authored by Senator Stumpf, is intended to encourage graduating high school seniors to go to community or technical college and provide employers with more skilled employees.

Another bill, introduced by Senator Bonoff, would allow high school students to take vocational training in return for academic credit. This dual training competency grant program would include a partnership with local employers interested in providing training opportunities to students.

Notably absent from the bills announced on Thursday was a bill on transportation, an issue that is shaping up to be a legislative priority for the Governor Dayton, DFLers and Republicans alike. Senator Dibble announced that he is crafting that bill and said it would likely be introduced early next week.

MOVEMN PRESS CONFERENCE

On Thursday, Move MN proposed a plan to fix Minnesota’s transportation needs. This statewide coalition of more than 200 businesses, organizations and local governments has called for a 10-year commitment to fixing Minnesota’s bridges, improving state highways and local roads, expanding access to transit, and creating safer routes to schools and work.

Move MN’s proposal includes increases in several fees and taxes that currently fund the state’s transportation system. The proposal generates at least \$856 million annually for statewide transportation projects.

For more information on the proposal, please see the attached press release from Move MN or visit their website www.movemn.org.

MN Chamber of Commerce Dinner

On Wednesday, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce held its annual Session Priorities Dinner. At the event, Governor Dayton spoke to business leaders asking for their help to build support for a transportation funding plan. He reiterated his intent to seek a new tax on gasoline, higher vehicle licensing fees and metropolitan-area sales tax increases for transit.

In a panel discussion later that evening, Republican House Speaker Kurt Daudt said lawmakers should consider tapping the \$1 billion projected surplus to infuse money into the system for now. Speaker Daudt noted that they may not be able to solve this on a long-term basis, but they need to get some money into the system, suggesting a \$500 million investment. Speaker Daudt said that the state needs to look at using some of these funds before they look to more taxes and fees.

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

Senate Bills

Bill Number	Author	Short Description
SF 11	Scalze	Metropolitan area transportation sales tax allocation requirements modifications.
SF 14	Brown	Public roads and bridges bond issue and appropriation procedures modification

House Bills

Bill Number	Author	Short Description
HF 4	Kelly	Transportation Department required to implement efficiencies; highway, road, and bridge funding provided for construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation; and money appropriated.
HF 9	Scott	Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government duties added, Metropolitan Council provided to budget on a state fiscal year starting July, and legislative approval of council's budgets required.
HF 38	Schoen	Ambulance provided payment procedures modified for services not covered by medical assistance.

REMINDER – REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

As a reminder, below is a list of the upcoming MLC Regional Legislative Breakfasts. We have received a number of RSVPs from council members and legislators. We look forward to some great discussions!

January 16th – MLC Regional Legislative Breakfast

Location: Plymouth Crowne Plaza

Time: 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM

Participating Cities: Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Edina, Maple Grove, Minnetonka, Plymouth, Shakopee

January 23rd – MLC Regional Legislative Breakfast

Location: Egan Community Center

Time: 7:30 AM – 9:00 AM

Participating Cities: Apple Valley, Burnsville, Egan, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Savage

February 13th – MLC Regional Legislative Breakfast

Location: League of Minnesota Cities Building

Time: 8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Participating Cities: Maplewood, Shoreview, Woodbury