



## CONTACT

# Tina --- LIEBLING

State Representative

### Office:

393 State Office Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
(651) 296-0573  
Toll Free  
1-800-339-9038

### Home:

P.O. Box 6332  
Rochester, MN 55903  
(507) 289-4664

### E-Mail:

[rep.tina.liebling@house.mn](mailto:rep.tina.liebling@house.mn)

### Webpage:

[www.house.mn/30A](http://www.house.mn/30A)

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# State Representative TINA LIEBLING

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MARCH 13, 2006

### State of the State

Last Thursday the Governor delivered his 2006 State of the State address to a packed house of legislators, State Supreme Court justices, commissioners and constitutional officers.

Many of the big ideas in the Governor's address are not partisan ideas. Democrats and Republicans agree that the state cannot stand still, that we need to innovate to compete in a challenging global economy. In fact, the Governor twice quoted the words of President Kennedy. I was pleased to hear the Governor recognize the importance of the proposed expansion of the University of Minnesota-Rochester and the Mayo-U of M Genomics Partnership to the strength of the state – projects we worked so hard to pass last year. I look forward to seeing the Governor follow up with action by fully supporting our plan to fund the first stage of the U of M—Rochester this session and the next stage of the Genomics Partnership.

The Governor talked about strengthening education, health care, the environment and jobs to move our state forward. However, the governor also raised the “wedge” issues that Republicans are pushing again this year, which make government a battleground for religious and personal issues that are more about winning elections than governing the state. This year, our main task is to invest in our infrastructure by passing a good bonding bill. Then, with a few extra dollars to spend, we should focus on the “bread and butter” issues most important to people's lives and the future of our state. If the Governor and the Legislature can focus on the uniting issues, 2006 will be a successful session.

### Rochester Small Businesses Bring Health Care Challenges to Light

Rep. Andy Welti and I hosted a small business town meeting recently to learn more about the health care challenges facing small employers.

We heard from local small business owners who want to provide health insurance for their employees but can't afford the high cost. These business owners work side by side with their uninsured employees. Often they have no coverage for themselves, either. Because they can't afford to offer health insurance they have a tough time competing for employees against the larger businesses who can.

I am again supporting legislation to allow small businesses to purchase coverage for their employees and individuals to purchase their own coverage under the MinnesotaCare program. The state would not pay for this coverage, but buying into MinnesotaCare is likely to be cheaper than what's currently available to small businesses. This would still not cover all uninsured people, but would be an important step toward coverage for all Minnesotans. The problem is too big and too complex for government to wash its hands and say, "Let the private sector do it."

Representative Bradley and Senator Kiscaden, Rochester's health policy experts in the Legislature, are retiring after this year. Rochester needs a representative who knows a lot about and spends much of her time on health issues. Because of my background and the needs of my district, I will focus on developing my expertise in health policy. In the 2007 legislative session I will seek appointment to the House health care committees.

## **THANKS FOR ATTENDING MY TOWN MEETINGS**

I have spent the last month at coffee shops, senior centers, and schools visiting with Rochester residents to hear your questions, concerns, and suggestions for the 2006 Legislative Session. Thanks to everyone who took time to visit with me. As always, I came away impressed with the thoughtfulness and community spirit of the people I work for – you. Visiting with constituents is my favorite part of this job.

During the legislative session you can make an appointment to meet with me at the State Capitol in St. Paul or during my weekend visits home. You can contact me by mail at: 393 State Office Building, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155; call me toll free at (800) 339-9038 or in Rochester at (507) 289-4664; or send me an e-mail at [Rep.Tina.Liebling@house.mn](mailto:Rep.Tina.Liebling@house.mn).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Please join me at Coffee & Conversation  
Saturday, March 18, 8 – 10 am  
Mayo High School cafeteria**

The topic will be Stadiums – Do We Want Them? Do We Need Them? Former Congressman Tim Penny will provide an overview of the Twins, Vikings, and U of M proposals, then we will break into small groups for discussion. This community issues forum is sponsored by a partnership of community group to promote citizen dialogue and engagement. Please come! I want to hear your views.