



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

Webpage:

www.house.mn/30A

To receive free e-mail updates, go to www.house.mn/30A and click on **E-mail Update.**



State Representative TINA LIEBLING

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MAY 4, 2006

Dear Friends,

We are now entering the final weeks of the 2006 Session. The agenda has come down to a few key bills that are passing the House and Senate and heading to final negotiations in conference committee. In this update I've covered a few of the issues that have come before the House in the last few days. As always, I welcome your comments or questions about these or other issues.

Warm regards,

U OF M ROCHESTER EXPANSION PASSES HOUSE FLOOR

We took a giant step forward in Rochester's quest to expand the U of M Rochester when the House passed the \$5 million request as part of the 2006 Supplemental Budget. An attempt to weaken the Rochester language was defeated with overwhelming bipartisan support. The U of M Rochester is also part of the Senate Supplemental Budget on its way to the Senate floor. A May 2 editorial in the Star Tribune said our proposal, "may be the most important addition to state spending legislators can make this year." I agree.

UPDATE: HOUSE LEADERSHIP REMOVES GENOMICS PARTNERSHIP FROM BUDGET

In 2005, I was proud to help pass \$15 million in state funding for the Mayo – University of Minnesota Genomics Research Partnership. The Partnership has already made significant research findings and holds great potential for medical advances that will alleviate human suffering and establish Minnesota's bioscience economy of the future.

I was therefore deeply disappointed when House leadership backed away from funding this year's \$18 million request for the Genomics Research Partnership. After the \$18 million appropriation passed several committees this session, House leadership replaced it with a meager \$100,000 in the final Supplemental Budget. I will urge my colleagues on the conference committee to find funding for this critical initiative.

You may be wondering why this is happening in a year when we have a budget surplus. Early in the session the House passed an \$88 million budget target. House leadership set aside the remaining \$317 million of the surplus to cover the budget hole created if the court overturns the “health impact fee.” The uncertainty could be eliminated, and the Partnership funded, if the Governor would just call the fee by its proper name, “tax”.

REMARKABLE COMPROMISE REACHED ON MERCURY REDUCTIONS

It’s not every day we hear good news on the environment, so I’m pleased to report that this week the House unanimously passed a compromise bill that will reduce dangerous mercury pollution in Minnesota by one-third. Right now, a lot of the fish in Minnesota lakes is so contaminated with mercury that it is not safe to eat. The best way we can cut down on mercury pollution is to limit emissions from coal-burning power plants.

A bipartisan effort brought utilities and environmental groups to the negotiating table to work out a plan that aggressively reduces mercury pollution without unnecessary increases in the price of electricity. The compromise, supported by the House, the Senate and the Governor, will reduce mercury emissions from the state’s biggest coal plants by 90% by 2014. The cost to consumers should be between 55 cents and \$1.55 per person, per electric bill.

DEDICATED SALES TAX FOR CONSERVATION

The House has passed a proposed constitutional amendment to dedicate 3/16th of the existing state sales tax to conservation and clean water. While I fully support protecting wildlife habitat, cleaning up our water, and providing support for the Arts, I could not support the bill because it would simply earmark existing funds. That would leave less money to educate our children, take care of our elderly and disabled, conduct medical research, and invest in our infrastructure.

We don’t need a constitutional amendment to allocate the funds our state already has. The Legislature and the Governor should bite the bullet and preserve wildlife habitat, clean up our waters, and provide for other priorities without asking voters to make them do it.



Rep. Tina Liebling reads at the 4th Annual Early Childhood Read-A-Thon

If you would like to receive free e-mail updates, go to www.house.mn/30A and click on **E-mail Update**.