

# CAPITOL UPDATE



## State Representative Joe Atkins

APRIL 2006

### ATKINS CALLS FOR BAN ON PROTESTS NEAR FUNERALS

Rep. Joe Atkins voted recently to ban protests near funerals, saying that grieving families deserve to be protected from disruptive protests.

“I wish the law was not even necessary,” Atkins said. “Family and friends who’ve lost a loved one deserve to be given space and respect to hold their funeral peacefully.”

The bill passed by the Minnesota House with unanimous support would make it illegal to demonstrate within 1000 feet of a funeral, and would outlaw demonstrations within an hour before and after the funeral. A similar bill passed the Senate; differences will be worked out in a conference committee.

“I am a strong supporter of first amendment rights,” said Atkins. “All we’re asking is that folks be allowed to grieve in peace without being accosted by hateful protestors.”

### UPDATE: ATKINS BILLS ADVANCE TO HOUSE FLOOR

Two bills sponsored by Rep. Atkins have passed committees and are awaiting a vote by the full House of Representatives. These bills are:

#### **Sex offender notification:**

This bill would require all sex offenders to undergo a risk assessment. Currently, only sex offenders who serve prison time are assigned a Level I, II or III Risk Level. The majority of offenders are sentenced to probation, not prison, and are never assigned a risk level. Representative Atkins’ bill would close this loophole.

#### **Anti-spam:**

This measure creates stiff criminal penalties for spammers in Minnesota. Called the “Minnesota Spam Control Act,” this bill would impose tough penalties against the worst spammers who use tactics of fraud and deceit to get spam into the e-mail inboxes of online consumers.

For more information about this and other issues, visit Joe’s website at [www.JoeAtkins.com](http://www.JoeAtkins.com)

## **STATE BUDGET CONTINUES TO SHOW SURPLUS**

The monthly numbers on the state budget continue to show signs of economic growth, with actual revenues outpacing forecasted figures, and expenses staying within projections.

The State of Minnesota has experienced the largest financial turnaround in its history during Atkins' time in office. When Representative Atkins was elected to the legislature in 2002, the state faced the largest deficit in its history, a record \$4.5 billion shortfall. Today, the state has a significant surplus.

Rep. Atkins is pushing for state surplus revenues to be used for property tax relief.

"Every person I talk to is facing a huge property tax increase on their home this year," said Atkins. "There are some folks, particularly seniors on a fixed income and young families, who are really being squeezed and don't know where to turn," he added.

## **ATKINS SPONSORS BILL TO PROTECT CONSUMERS WHO INVEST IN STOCKS AND BONDS**

If you own stocks, bonds or mutual funds, a bill sponsored by Rep. Joe Atkins applies to you. Atkins' bill, known as the Uniform Securities Act, provides additional protections for consumers and heightened requirements for investment brokers and dealers.

"More Minnesotans than ever before own stocks or bonds," said Atkins. "My bill would help keep Minnesotans safe from investor fraud and make sure that the people who help you make investments are properly registered with the state."

Rep. Atkins bill passed the House Commerce Committee unanimously with bi-partisan support and now goes to the floor for a full vote of the House.

## **BILL WOULD REQUIRE FOREIGN CALL CENTERS TO DISCLOSE LOCATION**

With more and more call center jobs being sent overseas, Rep. Atkins wants to make sure that your personal information is being protected. Atkins is sponsoring a bill that would require call centers in foreign countries to tell consumers where they are calling from before consumers give out private financial or medical information.

"We're working here at home to pass some of the toughest identity theft laws in the nation," said Atkins. "But we can't guarantee that countries like India have the same protections."

The House Commerce Committee voted to add Atkins' call center bill to the Governor's data privacy bill on March 28.

"Some companies want to hide the fact that they use offshore call centers," Atkins explained. "My question is: what do they have to hide? I think these companies should let their customers decide whether to share personal information over the phone with someone in a foreign country."

For more information about this and other issues, visit Joe's website at [www.JoeAtkins.com](http://www.JoeAtkins.com)