



SESSION UPDATE

May 20, 2011

END OF SESSION UPDATE: LEGISLATION AND SUMMER EVENTS

The end of the regular legislative session is just a few days away, and as of this writing, we don't have a balanced budget. Governor Dayton released his compromise proposal early this week. His new plan is slightly less than half of the budget deficit solved with revenue, and slightly more than half the budget deficit handled through cuts.

The governor modified his tax proposal and now the proposed fourth tier bracket would go from \$85,000 in taxable income for singles to \$150,000 and from \$150,000 in taxable income for couples to \$250,000. Governor Dayton's tax plan would affect less than 2 percent of Minnesotans.

We all understand that cuts have to be made, but the budget being offered by the Republicans would throw 200,000 Minnesotans off health care, raise property taxes, raise college tuition, make deep cuts to our nursing homes, and reduce services in our local communities all to prevent 2 percent of Minnesotans from contributing to the solution.

Sacrifices need to be made. Tough budget cuts will have to be done, but everybody has to pitch in. For too long, we've placed all the burden of balancing the budget on the middle class and poor. The middle class is paying more in health care premiums, more in college tuition, and more in property taxes. The squeeze on the middle class has to stop, and those who have the most should be paying their fair share.

I also believe that the people of Minnesota want us to sit down, have a reasonable discussion and come to a responsible compromise. Governor Dayton's proposal is just that: a compromise. It's reasonable, fair, balanced, and keeps our state from continuing to fall down the path of mediocrity.

This update contains information on many of the bills I chief authored this session, and some of the many events taking place in our area this summer. As always, please feel free to contact me—my number is (651) 296-4333 and my email is rep.john.ward@house.mn. My office door at the State Office Building in St. Paul is always open as well. Thank you for the honor of representing you in the legislature.



CONTACT ME

State Representative

JOHN WARD

221 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

(651) 296-4333

rep.john.ward@house.mn

www.house.mn/12A

If you no longer wish to receive this email update please email my legislative assistant Chris Kwapick at christopher.kwapick@house.mn to remove yourself from the list.

BILLS INTRODUCED IN 2011

In the 2011 session, I introduced a number of bills and attempted to move them through the process. Most of these bills were inspired by a constituent request. The bills, along with some details and their status are below.

HF 60: The bill, also known as Joey's Law, would establish a pilot project for DWI monitoring for people with revoked driver's licenses in Crow Wing County. The bill was referred to the Public Safety Committee, but received no action. The bill does not have a Senate author.

HF 61: This piece of legislation would fund the Minnesota Faith in Action program, a program to help interfaith caregivers. The bill was referred to the Health and Human Services Finance Committee. I requested a hearing, but no hearing was granted.

HF 62: This bill would update the Worker's Memorial Garden on the State Capitol Grounds to include a reference to the Milford Mine Disaster in Crosby that occurred on February 5, 1924. The bill was referred to the State Government Finance Committee and passed, but my proposal is likely to be incorporated into the Worker's Memorial Garden without any further legislation action.

HF 123: The bill would increase penalties for illegally passing a car on the right. The bill was referred to the Public Safety Committee and does not have a Senate author.

HF 137: This bill would name the walking and biking bridge over Excelsior Road the Terry McGaughey Memorial Bridge. Terry worked for 25 years to make the Paul Bunyan Trail a reality, and this recognition is well deserved. This bill was eventually incorporated into an author's amendment to the Environment Policy Bill. The Environment Policy Bill is currently in conference committee.

HF 138: This is an economic development piece of legislation that extends tax exempt status for city-owned lots. This bill was folded into the Omnibus Tax Bill.

HF 156: This bill repeals the tax exemption on seasonal property owners for school operating levies. Noncommercial seasonal properties, like cabins, would still be exempt from the state general levy, but would no longer be exempt from any referendum levies. The bill received a hearing and was laid over for possible inclusion in the Omnibus Tax Bill, but it was not ultimately included.

HF 157: This bill would appropriate money for a Brainerd

Veterans Nursing Home. Our veterans in the area deserve a nursing home facility so they can be properly cared for as they grow old, and can live out their lives with dignity. I proposed the bill as an amendment in the Capital Investment Committee, as I had requested a committee hearing but was not granted one. I was informed that the measure would be strongly considered for inclusion in a future bonding bill.

HF 189: This bill provides funding for a Cuyuna Lakes State Trail. I also proposed this as an amendment in the Capital Investment Committee and was informed that the measure would be strongly considered for inclusion in a future bonding bill.

HF 253: This bill would repeal accelerated taxes for small businesses, was heard in the Taxes Committee for possible inclusion in the omnibus tax bill. Approximately 160,000 businesses in Minnesota pay this accelerated tax. It was ultimately not included in the omnibus bill.

HF 739: This piece of legislation would require heart defibrillators in every school in Minnesota. The bill was referred to the Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee, but has no Senate author.

HF 740: This bill allows the number of watershed district managers to be reduced. This bill also has no Senate author.

HF 1162: This bill is designed to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Invasive aquatics, including such species as zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil and spiny waterfleas, have been discovered in more than 1,000 lakes and rivers around Minnesota, including waterways in District 12A. They can damage the state's water-based recreation and tourism economy, affect water quality and navigation, destroy fish habitats, drive out important native species, and impede beach access.

The bill would authorize the DNR to conduct more thorough watercraft inspections and enforcement, enforce penalties for violations, and require training and permitting for lake service providers. It would also streamline the process of obtaining permits for large-scale control of invasive aquatic plants. The bill was incorporated into the Environment Omnibus Policy Bill. This bill has received strong bipartisan support, and regardless of when or how the budget stalemate is resolved, I'm hopeful this bill will become law this session.

HF 1516: This bill deals with retirement incentives for state employees, making early retirement a mandatory option for veterans. The bill has no Senate author.

SUMMER EVENTS

IN THE COMMUNITIES OF BRAINERD/BAXTER, CROSBY/IRONTON AND NISSWA AREAS

Every summer, our wonderful communities hold so many great events. The list below is not comprehensive, but will give you an idea of the many events in our area. I hope to see many of you at these wonderful events!

- May 30:** Memorial Day Ceremonies and Events throughout Brainerd, Crosby and Nisswa
- June 4:** Teen Challenge — Fishing Contest Fundraiser
- June 10:** Grand Opening of the Crosby Mountain Bike Trail
- June 15:** Cow Milking Contest — Dairy Month Events at Culvers, 2 PM
- June 18:** Mariucci Fiesta — Confidence Learning Center, 3-6 PM
- June 18:** Confidence Learning Center Fishing Classic
- June 25:** Komen Race for the Cure — Forestview Middle School
- June 25:** Miss Brainerd Pageant — Washington Education Services Building, 6 PM
- July 3-4:** Fourth of July Celebrations in Brainerd/Baxter, Crosby/Ironton, and Nisswa Areas
- Aug. 2-6:** Crow Wing County Fair
- Aug. 20:** Walk a Mile in Her Shoes Event — Mills Ford

Many walks and races for specific fundraising purposes will be occurring all throughout the summer and fall. Please check your local media for other events in our area. I'll see you out there!



Rep. Ward with 6th grade students from Forestview Middle School in the Capitol Rotunda



Rep. Ward speaking passionately on the House floor in support of one of his local bills



The Crosby-Ironton 5th grade class with the area legislation delegation and Governor Mark Dayton, along with former State Representative Kris Hasskamp on the front steps of the Capitol