

Lyndon Carlson

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

WEEKLY SESSION UPDATE

REP. CARLSON OPPOSES CUTS TO HOSPITALS, LOSS OF HEALTHCARE FOR THOUSANDS OF MINNESOTANS



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House of Representatives:

Session Weekly:

[www.house.leg.state.mn.us/
hinfo/swmain.asp](http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/swmain.asp)

State Senate:

Senate Briefly:

www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/briefly/

Rep. Carlson Opposes Cuts to Hospitals, Loss of Healthcare for Thousands of Minnesotans

Late last week, the House debated the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill. I simply could not support this bill, which has been labeled "cruel and cowardly" by editorial writers across the state.

The bill takes away health insurance from at least 25,500 working citizens of Minnesota. This follows cuts and changes in eligibility requirements for programs such as MinnesotaCare that caused 77,000 Minnesotans to lose their healthcare since 2001.

The bill also increases by \$157 million the cost of charity care absorbed by our hospitals. Hospitals in our state lost almost \$330 million in 2004 due to bills that patients were unable to pay or were written off by providers as charity care. These "uncompensated" costs have increased by 28 percent in recent years.

In addition, the bill steals money from the Health Care Access Fund, which is primarily financed through the 2% provider tax and intended to provide affordable insurance for working Minnesotans, and redirects the funds to

the General Fund to balance the budget.

I could not support the bill because of its lack of commitment to ensuring for the health of our citizens and our hospitals, especially because there were other, better, alternatives.

The House DFL Health Care Plan, a Mainstreet healthcare plan, would reduce the cost of healthcare for working Minnesotans and our most vulnerable populations, while also improving access to care. It would cover more, not fewer, Minnesotans.

Under our plan small employers, the self-employed such as family farmers, and individuals would be able to buy into existing state healthcare programs in order to reduce their insurance costs.

It would eliminate the \$5,000 cap so that individuals who face catastrophic illness like cancer will be able to get the care they need, relieve the strain on our nursing homes, and uphold the integrity of the Health Care Access Fund.

The Senate has also constructed a Health and Human Services bill that I find to be much more palatable. I remain hopeful that conference between the two bodies will end in the creation of a much better, if not perfect, bill.

REP. CARLSON VOTES 'NO' ON HOUSE EDUCATION BILL

In last week's edition of my legislative update, I described at length the House Democratic Education plan - a plan that called for "strong schools," using "honest solutions" to address the budget crises experienced by so many of our state's school districts.

This week, I voted against the Republican Omnibus Education Finance Bill. The funding within the bill will not be sufficient to stop the cuts to our classrooms or looming teacher lay-offs.

I would have liked to see some cooperation, some bipartisan give and take, between the Republican plan and our House Democratic plan. However, when our plan was offered in Ways and Means this week as an amendment to the Omnibus Education Finance Bill the significant Republican majority in that committee voted it down.

The DFL plan would make significant investments in our classrooms. The Robbinsdale school district would

receive \$15.398 million in new money under our education proposal. This is an additional \$994 per pupil. Hopkins schools would receive an additional \$8.841 million in funds. That is an additional \$962 per pupil.

This is a significant increase over the plan supported by the House Republican Caucus. District revenue increases under the DFL plan would exceed those proposed by my Republican counterparts over the biennium by investing an additional \$4.958 million, or \$321 per pupil, for our Robbinsdale schools and \$2.184 million, or \$238 per pupil, for our Hopkins schools.

There remains hope of improving the bill, as the next step will be a conference committee between the House and Senate. The Senate makes greater investments in our schools without the dependence on \$112 million in property tax increases included within the House bill.

JOIN REP. CARLSON AT THE NEXT SD 45 TOWN HALL MEETING

I would like to invite all of you to join your SD 45 team - Sen. Ann Rest, Rep. Sandra Peterson and me - at our next Town Hall Meeting. We look forward to hearing your comments on the state budget and other issues of state government and will be prepared to answer constituent questions.

May 7th, 2005

Crystal City Hall
4141 Douglas Dr. N

at 10:00 AM