



State Representative **TINA LIEBLING**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

APRIL 29, 2005

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Dear Friends,

At the House, we continue our work on the large Omnibus spending bills. These bills contain many smaller bills that affect policy and funding in many different areas. Bills that pass the House will go to conference committees where differences must be resolved before bills go back to each body for an up or down vote. A bill that passes both bodies then goes to the governor for his signature or veto.

This week, I voted in support of the Public Safety Finance Bill, which sets policy and funding for Public Safety programs, including funding for judicial and enforcement functions to combat methamphetamine related crimes.

I voted against two Omnibus bills, the Jobs Policy and Finance Bill and the Health and Human Services bill. In this edition of my legislative update, I explain some of the reasons why I voted against these bills and discuss the House Democratic plans that I believe take a more balanced and reasoned approach to these areas of state government.

It is a great privilege to serve you in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Please call, write, e-mail, and visit whenever you have a comment, question, or concern.

Warmly,

Liebling Says 'No' to Bill that Could Move Minnesotans from Work to Welfare

Today, the House passed the Omnibus Jobs Policy and Finance Bill. If it becomes law, this bill will hurt hard-working families. I voted against this bill.

Cuts to childcare assistance in the bill total \$69.8 million, or 30% of the investment that the state makes in providing affordable childcare for working families. This follows cuts in the last biennium that eliminated childcare assistance for 10,000 Minnesota children. When we cut off access to affordable childcare, working parents must scramble to find childcare on a shoestring or must quit

working altogether. That is why I could not support cuts that will cause thousands of additional families to lose care.

The bill also includes cuts to the MN Housing Finance Agency of \$12.5 million, putting stable housing out of the reach of some struggling families and eliminates the very successful Minnesota Youth Program, YouthBuild Program and Learn-to-Earn program. These programs serve 4,400 economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth by helping them obtain the work skills they need to be successful in the labor market. The bill elimi-

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nates these programs regardless of demand--there is currently a waiting list of 10,500 young people seeking to participate.

House Democrats have worked to craft a plan that provides a better vision and an improved future for working people in Minnesota.

Our plan would fully fund workforce housing and the homeless prevention initiative, maintain the workforce development fund, and infuse \$18 million for additional job training. In addition, we would strengthen, not dismantle, childcare assistance by \$18 million to help provide our hardworking young families with the tools that they need to be successful.

Liebling Opposes Cuts to Hospitals, Loss of Health Care for Thousands of Minnesotans

Today, the House passed the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill. I simply could not support this bill, which has been labeled "cruel and cowardly" by editorial writers.

The bill takes away health insurance from 30,000 working citizens of Minnesota. These cuts follow cuts that took place since 2001 and caused 77,000 Minnesotans to lose their health care .

The bill also reduces payments to hospitals and increases by \$157 million the cost of charity ("uncompensated") care they must provide. 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 the end, this cost is passed on to you and me in the form of higher hospital charges and higher insurance costs. The provider tax (or "sick tax") was supposed to provide affordable insurance for working Minnesotans. This health care bill loots the Health Care Access Fund, which is primarily financed through the 2% provider tax, to balance the rest of the budget. It also eliminates all funding for the successful Suicide Prevention program.

I could not support the bill, but I have been working with my colleagues to develop an alternative.

The House DFL Health Care Plan would reduce the cost of healthcare for working Minnesotans and our most vulnerable populations, while also improving access to care.

I am proud to support a comprehensive healthcare plan sponsored by House Democrats that 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.

Financed by an increase in the cigarette tax, 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. It would relieve the strain on our nursing homes, reduce the provider tax, and uphold the integrity of the Health Care Access Fund.

TALK WITH TINA!

*Share your ideas and concerns with
Rep. Liebling at an informal meeting*

**Saturday, April 30, 2005
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm**

**Rochester Public Library, Room A
101 2nd Street Southeast**