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State Representative **TINA LIEBLING**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

APRIL 22, 2005

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this week's edition of my legislative update.

The work at the legislature is certainly reaching a hectic pace. We are beginning to see the large omnibus appropriations bill for each major sector of state government - from education to transportation, healthcare to public safety.

In this week's update, I would like to take a look at the Omnibus Higher Education finance bill that passed the House this week. I am pleased to report that it includes some promising investments for our economy and our citizens in the greater Rochester area.

We have also passed significant legislation aimed at combating the growing epidemic of methamphetamine abuse. And while I would have preferred to see additional dollars aimed at rehabilitation of these addicts as opposed to the reliance on sentencing, I supported the bill as a good first step to addressing the problem by strictly regulating the precursor ingredients necessary for "cooking" meth.

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,

Bill to Address Methamphetamine Abuse Passes the House

The methamphetamine epidemic in Minnesota has a significant human cost. The meth labs that are so common in our area are putting our citizens-too often children and innocent bystanders-in grave danger. The meth epidemic also costs our local taxpayers millions of dollars a year, strains our law enforcement agencies, and chokes our prison system.

In an attempt to limit meth production in the state, the House and Senate have passed bills to limit the availability of over the counter sale of medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine that are necessary ingredients in meth production.

The Senate passed a strong meth bill, but the House bill is even stronger. The House version will now go back to the Senate. If the Senate disagrees with the House version the two bills will go to a conference committee where the differences will be resolved.

The House bill imposes an outright ban on the over-the-counter sale of the tablet forms of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine beginning in 2006. In the meantime it imposes tough restrictions on the sale of these drugs, including placing them behind the pharmacy counter. I strongly supported this bill. In fact, when the debate

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turned to the difficulty rural people may have in getting to a pharmacy, I reminded the body that these drugs are not a matter of life and death, and that they would still be available in other forms. While I recognize that many people rely on these drugs, the need to get them out of the hands of potential meth cooks is compelling.

This bill will save lives. It will save children from exposure to dangerous meth labs and it will save our local taxpayers a substantial amount of money. The bill includes some funding for law enforcement, public defense services, and meth lab cleanup. Missing from the bill is money for treatment for meth addicts—a critically important piece that I intend to work on in future years.

This bill is an excellent first step to protecting our community and our state.

House Passes Higher Education Finance Bill, Makes Investments in Rochester's Future

Today, the House passed its Omnibus Higher Education

Bill. An omnibus bill is an enormous bill containing many smaller bills. Although amendments can be offered, the total amount spent by the bill cannot be changed. Every omnibus bill contains things each legislator likes and things they do not. This Omnibus Higher Education Bill has some pieces that are very important for Rochester. It provides planning money and a structure to move Rochester forward on Higher Education, and it also includes the initial operating funds for the Mayo-U of M Genomics project that I believe is so important to Rochester and the future of Minnesota.

That said, this is not a bill I was happy to vote for. The funding included within this bill does not make up for the unprecedented cuts made by the 2003 legislature. And as a result, tuition will increase nearly 10% for students at our public colleges, who have already experienced consecutive years of tuition increases. The bill does make an additional \$202 million investment in our institutions of higher learning statewide - a step in the right direction but not enough to provide opportunity for many promising students.



TALK WITH TINA!

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

**Saturday, April 23, 2005
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm**

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