

**Ryan Winkler**  
State Representative

District 44B  
Hennepin County



# Minnesota House of Representatives

March 28, 2011

Speaker Kurt Zellers  
463 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Mr. Speaker:

During your March 25th press briefing you made a surprising revelation about the fiscal projections House and Senate leaders are using to create the omnibus budget bills. Specifically, you acknowledged that fiscal chairs are "depending on figures from private business and from other states" to create the budget rather than using non-partisan fiscal notes from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB).

Your reliance on private vendors to create the public's budget is unprecedented and deeply concerning. With a \$5 billion budget deficit, we must use facts, figures, and verifiable public data to create a reliable budget for the next two years. Fiscal notes from MMB do not always give us the numbers we want, but they do have a decades-long track record of steadiness and reliability that we have trusted regardless of political party. In fact, during the last four years, not one fiscal bill passed out of the House Finance Committee without a completed fiscal note, even though the Governor was not the same party as the legislative majorities. This practice is basic fiscal discipline. If we begin disregarding fiscal notes, the State's revenue and spending projections will be less accurate and more prone to error, and we may find ourselves forced into special sessions as a result of poor budget projections.

In addition, fiscal notes provided by MMB are public and subject to public review. Minnesotans deserve full disclosure as to who is working the calculator, and what assumptions are used in building the budget. Public review and disclosure are not available if private vendors are providing you with your fiscal analysis. In the interest of ensuring that the public is fully informed about your budget, this letter is a formal request for you to answer the following questions:

1. Who are the private vendors that have provided House Republicans with financial consulting on the state's budget?
2. Do any of the private vendors with which you have consulted have a financial stake in the state budget area in which they provided you information?



3. Were any of the private vendors paid or compensated in any way whatsoever for their assistance in providing numbers for public revenue or expenditure bills?
4. When and how often did these consultations with private vendors occur?
5. Were these meetings public and did they recognize Minnesota's open meetings laws?

According to the schedule you have set, we will begin voting on these budget bills today. You will seriously damage the institution of the Minnesota House of Representatives by passing omnibus budget bills before receiving completed fiscal notes, by disregarding fiscal notes that have been completed, and by using private vendors' budget analyses without first answering the five questions above. Accordingly, as Speaker, I trust you will respond quickly to these questions so that the Minnesota House of Representatives will not abandon decades of sound fiscal management. And, I hope you share my determination to keep Minnesotans informed about the accuracy and soundness of the methods used to develop the budget that spends their tax dollars.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ry', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ryan Winkler  
State Representative