



PRE-SESSION Newsletter

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The 2016 legislative session is set to be one of the shortest in recent memory due to ongoing renovations at the capitol. Despite its short length, there are a number of major issues that will be addressed in the coming session.

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Taxes

The Minnesota Management and Budget Office released its February forecast on Friday, revealing that the state's surplus is \$900 million. This \$900 million is remaining funds that are available to use as \$600 million has already been constitutionally directed into the state's budget reserves.

Such a large surplus indicates that Minnesotans are being overtaxed and I would like to see a portion of this money go towards tax relief and reform.

Last year, the House passed a tax bill that reduced taxes on middle class families, college students, seniors, veterans, small businesses, and more. I would expect similar legislation to be looked at this coming session.

Transportation

In addition to tax relief, a comprehensive transportation bill is in the works for the coming session. Most agree that Minnesota's roads and bridges are in dire need of repair and as you may remember, the House passed a bill last year that would have invested \$7 billion in Minnesota's transportation infrastructure without raising taxes. This legislation was blocked last year due to Governor Dayton and the Senate DFL Majority's insistence on a gas tax.

With a large budget surplus and an innovative approach that re-purposes already existing revenue streams, I believe we can make serious investments in our transportation infrastructure without increasing the gas tax.

In our community, I am pleased to see the growing bi-partisan coalition of legislators, city council members, county officials and others supporting the Highway 10/169 corridor, branded the "Greater Minnesota Gateway" by the coalition. Recently, the Highway 10 working group met with members of MnDOT and the Speaker of the House to discuss ways we can increase traffic flow along Highway 10 and make safety improvements. As a group, it was agreed that it is important to be on the same page and push for the same goal as well as continue the momentum from the recent opening of the Armstrong interchange.

I look forward to continuing to work with our city and county officials to advocate for improving the Highway 10 corridor between Fair Oak in Anoka and

MNsure

In January the non-partisan Office of the Legislative Auditor issued a report that found, among other issues, that the Department of Human Services paid as much as \$271 million in taxpayer dollars to ineligible public health program recipients.

This shocking example of government waste is unacceptable and must be addressed. I will continue to work with my colleagues to hold MNsure and the Department of Human Services accountable for their shortcomings and ensure that Minnesotans have access to cost-efficient and reliable health care.

University of Minnesota Bill

After the scandal that arose last summer with the release of undercover videos revealing the disturbing practice of buying and selling aborted baby organs for research, several lawmakers and staff made inquiries to the University of Minnesota as to whether or not they participated in such research.

The initial response was no. However, an investigation later found they do in fact perform research upon aborted fetal organs. While the University apologized for the initial miscommunication, I am still deeply troubled that they so easily moved from stating they do not do this research to stating it "holds promise" and must continue.

Given that the University receives millions of taxpayer dollars each year, I believe it is our duty as legislators to request the University cease research that so many of our constituents consider immoral. For more background, I encourage you to read the following articles from the Star Tribune:

<http://www.startribune.com/after-an-awkward-flip-flop-the-u-defends-fetal-tissue-research/367110301/>

<http://www.startribune.com/fetal-tissue-research-should-cease-at-u/365492261/>

In response to this controversy, I am authoring a bill that would withhold a portion of the University's medical school funding until they establish a center to procure fetal tissue in an ethical manner; that is, from babies that die of natural causes. Once they establish this center and verify they are no longer researching on aborted babies, the legislature would release the rest of their funding.