

for immediate release
May 13, 1983

Contact: Sarah Gardner
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Plan for Human Rights Department draws criticism

A proposal to place Minnesota's Human Rights Department under the Department of Administration for the next two years has drawn criticism at the State Capitol. In a Minnesota House session, May 12, Representative Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) chairman of the State Departments Division of Appropriations, to save delaying action on the bill, withdrew the department change from the state departments appropriations bill.

Criticism of the plan came May 9 from Representative Randy Staten (DFL-Mpls.), the only Black member of the House, who said the plan was "bad management" and represented a case of "blaming the victim."

St. Paul City Councilman Bill Wilson told the Governmental Operations Committee May 11 the move would "reduce the Human Rights Department to a second class status" and send a negative message about the department to the public.

Kahn defended the idea May 9, saying the department had poorly managed its affairs and has a backlog of 3,000 cases, some 6 years old.

But, May 12, in response to a resolution from the Governmental Operations Committee asking for the return of the omnibus state departments appropriations bill to committee, Kahn withdrew the mandate to move the department, along with several other proposals in the bill.

Members of the Governmental Operations Committee said they wanted the opportunity to review the Human Rights plan and several other state government policy-changing proposals in the bill, but the House voted against sending the bill back to committee.

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Contact: Deborah Friedman
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Bill would increase education expense tax deduction

The Minnesota House Taxes Committee on May 11 voted to increase the amount of educational expenses parents can take as an income tax deduction, despite opponents' charges that the deduction itself may violate the Constitutional requirement of separation of church and state.

Joe O'Neill, Minnesota Citizens for Educational Freedom, says about 10 percent of Minnesota students get their education in private schools.

He says parents of those children don't object to paying taxes for public schools but believe they should get some help with expenses they pay to educate their children.

And he says the proposal could actually save the state money, because it costs less to grant tax deductions than to educate all the private school students in the public system.

But Rose Hermodson, from the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, says money is not the issue. The issue, she says, is that the U.S. Supreme Court has yet to rule on whether the deduction is Constitutional. And, she says using tax money to encourage parents to send children to private schools drains the public schools of needed resources.

The committee recommended passage of HF404 (Osthoff, DFL-St. Paul), which would raise the deduction from \$500 to \$850 for elementary school students and from \$700 to \$1190 for secondary. Representative Osthoff, speaking for his bill pointed out that parents of public school students can deduct money they spend for things like calculators and musical instrument rentals.

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Tax bill negotiations to address indexing, other disputes

Five state representatives and five senators will make final decisions on what to include in the 1983 legislative session tax bill in a conference committee that will continue to meet until a majority of the members agree on a compromise bill.

House members brought their tax proposal to the committee after passing the bill 74-58 on May 9. The Senate proposal passed on May 10, on a 35-32 vote.

Both bills make the six percent sales tax permanent, and continue the 10 percent income surtax through June 30, 1985. Together, those changes increase tax collections about \$770 million for the biennium.

Many homeowners would get less homestead credit under both bills, although the formula changes differ. The Senate bill would change the percent of tax bill the state pays from the current 58 percent to 50 percent; the House bill substitutes a variable rate that would be below 58 percent for cities with mill rates below 114 mills.

One major controversial element in the Senate bill would suspend income tax indexing until the state treasury has a five-percent-of-budget cushion.

Members of the all-DFL conference committee are Representatives Harry Sieben (Hastings), Willis Eken (Twin Valley), John Tomlinson (St. Paul), John Brandl (Mpls) and Robert Vanasek (New Prague); and Senators Doug Johnson (Cook), Collin Peterson (Detroit Lakes), Neil Dieterich (St. Paul), Linda Berglin (Mpls), and Steve Novak (New Brighton).

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Contact: Bonnie Kollodge
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Minnesota House approves surcharge on fishing licenses

A \$2.50 surcharge on fishing licenses got approval of the Minnesota House May 11, as part of SF634 (Sarna, DFL-Mpls), the Omnibus Fishing Bill. The bill's author, Representative John Sarna, says the increase would raise \$3.36 million for the game and fish fund for expansion of fish programs, for aeration, stocking, and upgrading sport fishing.

Eighty-five percent of money we raise on fishing licenses now, pays for personnel. This bill will pay for more and better programs and limit dollars for administrative or personnel costs to 10 percent, said Sarna.

"Who owns the fish in Minnesota?" argued Representative Gaylin Den Ouden (IR-Prinsburg), in an unsuccessful try to lower the \$2.50 surcharge. "Do we as taxpayers already own them? And do we have to pay out more money to catch our own fish?"

Other provisions in the bill would require the commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources to ensure the quality of hunting and fishing in Minnesota; allow the commissioner to designate up to 100 lakes and 25 streams for experimental waters, with the requirement to hold public hearings in affected areas.

The bill permits the commissioner to classify experimental waters for different uses; to post date and time of opening of netting season on whitetish, tulipee, and herring 48 hours in advance; to increase fees for fish houses and dark houses by \$2.

The bill permits the commissioner to designate lakes where fishers may take muskies less than 36 inches, but not less than 30; prohibits issuing new commercial licenses on Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake; and calls for the phase-out of commercial fishing on those lakes by 1994.

from the

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE, ROOM 9, STATE CAPITOL, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55155 • 612-296-2146

for immediate release
May 20, 1983

Contact: Deborah Friedman
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Pared-down parks bonding bill gets House approval

Concern over the amount of land in public ownership has led legislators to reduce the bonding level for land acquisition in the parks and open space program, and to restrict the use of funds they do authorize. On May 19, the Minnesota House of Representatives approved HF796 (Voss, DFL-Blaine), a bill to set the level of bonding for improvement and expansion of metropolitan and statewide parks.

Before approving the bill, the House added Rep. Voss' amendment, which removed about \$2 million of bonds for acquisition of parks, waterbanks and wildlife lands from the total bonding of \$37 million, and to require the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to have a work plan before it acquires land.

"The emphasis is different this year," Voss said. "In the past we have emphasized acquisition of land, but we've responded to concerns of legislators and agency people by shifting the emphasis on bond use to two-thirds betterment, one-third acquisition, instead of the other way around, as it has been."

The House also approved Rep. Tony Stadum's (IR-Ada) amendment, which would prohibit DNR from buying more land until they sell land of equal value. "It's time to put a cap on what the DNR owns," Stadum said. "The state owns 5.2 million acres of land, and more tax-forfeited land."

The bill passed the House on a 104-27 vote.

for immediate release
Friday, May 20

contact: Nancy J. Miller
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State conference committee deadlocked on pari-mutuel horse-racing bill

A conference committee of representatives and senators at the State Capitol on May 17 and 18 agreed on most issues in the House and Senate, but remain deadlocked on two: a racing commission's duties and the amount of track earning "take-out".

"If we don't consider take-out carefully, we won't get a first-class facility, and then we can kiss horse racing in Minnesota goodbye," said Senator Clarence Purfeerst (DFL-Faribault) May 19, arguing for the Senate's position on a higher take-out amount for track owners that reduces the return on winning tickets.

Representative Richard Kostohryz (DFL-North St. Paul) says the higher takeout will only provide larger profits for race track investors and bettors will go to the track less because of lower winning returns.

Both bills set up a racing commission to oversee racing, but the Senate version also delegates racing jurisdiction to the Department of Public Safety, a provision House members say is unnecessary.

Tax-increment financing, a system that allows track builders a discount on construction projects, track size and location, and liquor licenses are bargaining tools House members say they are willing to "sweeten the pot with" according to Representative Tom Osthoff (DFL-St. Paul), as long as the House provisions prevail.

But Senators don't consider the concessions enough, and the conference committee remains in recess until the Senate or House calls for further negotiations.

for immediate release
May 20, 1983

Contact: Bonnie Kollodge
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Minnesota House approves judges' pay raise bill

Judges will get a \$6000 raise, and a compensation council will set salary increases for Constitutional officers, executive branch agency heads and legislators, under a bill the Minnesota House approved May 17.

House members voted out provisions of the bill which would have increased judges' salaries according to years of experience, and established a council to determine pay raises for judges.

The judges' pay raise didn't bring as much debate as the council to set pay raises for legislators, agency heads, and constitutional officers. Under SF415 (Simoneau, DFL-Fridley) pay raises would go into effect without a vote on the floor of the House and Senate, unless lawmakers pass a bill to change or reject the council's recommendation.

House author, Representative Wayne Simoneau, says the Legislature has done a poor job of determining compensation for its members in the past, and this would be a fair way to address the emotionally charged issue. Another concern, according to Simoneau, is offering salaries to attract and keep competent, capable people in state government.

Minority Leader Dave Jennings and other opponents say the bill allows back door pay raises for lawmakers, sparing legislators a tough political vote, and may turn a citizen legislature into a professional, fulltime body.

"This could be the turning point," said Jennings. "It could be the end of the so-called part-time citizen Legislature in Minnesota, whether or not that's the intent."

The House passed the bill on a 68-64 vote.

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May 20, 1983

Contact: Sarah Gardner
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State conference committee agrees on
higher education tuition, faculty salaries

A conference committee of five state representatives and five state senators reached an agreement on Minnesota higher education tuition and faculty salaries May 18 at the State Capitol.

Conferees on the Higher Education Omnibus Appropriations bill unanimously adopted the Senate position on tuition, a figure lower than the House had approved, and the House position on faculty salaries, a figure higher than the Senate's.

Under the plan, average tuition at the University of Minnesota would increase by 25 percent over the next two years—from the current \$1447 a year to \$1816. State university students would have to pay 50 percent more by 1985, with average yearly tuition going from \$849 to \$1278. Average community college tuition would go up 31 percent—from \$767 a year to \$1004 a year.

Faculty salaries, a top priority item for the University of Minnesota, would get a five percent increase in 1984 and another five percent in 1985. The Senate proposed a three percent yearly boost.

By reducing proposed increases for high technology items, Indian scholarships, and financial aid the committee was able to get the tuition figures down from what the governor recommended, and also to work in the higher faculty salary proposal.

NEWS

from the

MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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May 27, 1983

To: Editors and news directors
From: Bonnie Kollodge
Re: Press releases

The 1983 regular session has ended, and the May 27 series is the last set of releases we will send out on a weekly basis.

You'll hear from us if we have newsworthy happenings at the Capitol to report on.

Please let us know if our office can be of any help to you, or you want to make changes to your mailing address.

for immediate release
May 27, 1983

Contact: Bonnie Kollodge
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Governor signs the parimutuel betting bill

The governor has signed into law the parimutuel horse racing bill the Legislature approved over the May 21-22 weekend. The legislation creates a nine-member racing commission and limits the number of major tracks in the Twin Cities area to one.

The governor selects commission members, and their duties will include licensing tracks, supervising personnel, setting racing dates, supervising betting, enforcing betting laws, collecting and distributing tax revenues, and ensuring the integrity of racing in Minnesota.

The House and Senate set takeout percentages (amount that doesn't go back to bettors) at 17 percent of total bets and 23 percent on exotic bets, such as the daily double.

Of the takeout, trackowners would get about 11.5 percent; purses to winning horses—about 5 percent; 1.75 percent would go to the state when the total amount bet, or the handle, is below \$48 million dollars, and 1 percent when the handle is more; .5 percent on the first \$48 million bet, and 1 percent on anything over will go into a breeders' fund to encourage horse breeding.

In addition to their share of the takeout, track owners may keep all revenues from concessions.

Though it will most likely be several years before a metro area track is operational, tracks may begin in other parts of the state, and county fairs can have parimutuel horse racing.

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Contact: Sarah Gardner
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Spending bill provides state employee raise, pension pay-back

Minnesota legislators approved a House-Senate compromise May 23 which provides money for a four percent state employee pay raise in 1984, and a three and a half percent raise the following year. The pay hike is part of the omnibus spending bill for state departments.

Under the bill, on July 1, 1983, the state will also stop taking the extra two percent pension contribution out of state employee checks that has helped cover a 1982 budget deficit. The state will repay the extra money to employees upon their retirement. Those pay-backs start next year with a \$600,000 lump sum payment to civil employees who retire during the 1984-85 biennium.

Other provisions of the bill include financing of the governor's economic development initiatives, but at lower spending levels than he originally recommended. They include \$15 million for a small business enterprise fund, \$2.4 million for export financing, and \$8.5 million for tourism, with \$2 million of the tourism dollars available only with matching contributions from private sources.

The governor's proposal to house the state's water agencies under one roof changed slightly under the House-Senate compromise, with the Water Resources Board surviving as a separate state agency. The Water Planning Board and the Southern Minnesota River Basins Board will become part of the Environmental Quality Board.

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Contact: Bonnie Kollodge
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Legislators pass final money bills in long weekend sessions

Meeting through Saturday night and into the early hours of Sunday, May 22, the House and Senate approved legislation on pay raises for judges, Constitutional officers, and other top state officials; delays in mortgage foreclosures; school aids; workers' compensation, and a freeze on nursing home construction.

Part of the bill creates a 16-member compensation council to study and set pay levels for legislators and future raises for judges and members of the executive branch. Raises the council recommends would be automatic, unless the Legislature votes against them.

Legislation to delay mortgage foreclosures allows farm-owners to go to court to get a one-year grace period on mortgage payments if they can show inability to pay because of recession hardships. Home-owners could get a six-month delay.

The \$2.28 billion bill for public school and secondary vo-tech programs over the next two years went to the governor. Per pupil aid goes up to \$1,475, and \$5.8 million goes for computer teaching and high-tech demonstration sites.

Under one of two workers' comp proposals, a state group would get \$5 million to start insuring employers for worker injury claims. Benefit changes in the second bill mean larger awards for people with the most severe injuries, and smaller awards to those less severely injured.

For all types of injuries, workers would get reduced awards if they get a bonafide job offer; increased awards if they don't.

The Legislature approved a three-year moratorium on new nursing home beds and revised state reimbursements to nursing homes for care of Medicaid patients.

for immediate release
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Final tax bill restores stability in state budget, supporters say

"This bill restores fiscal responsibility to the state," said State Representative John Brandl, a DFL'er from Minneapolis, as he urged support of the final tax bill on the last night of the legislative session, May 23.

The omnibus tax bill raises, according to House Taxes Committee Chairman John Tomlinson, \$760 million in continuing taxes, and \$190 in new taxes.

Tomlinson, and other conference committee members who worked out the final version of the bill, stressed the need for continued taxes to pay for the shifts that balanced the previous biennium budget and for a reserve fund to prevent recurrence of the budgetary special sessions of 1981.

Brandl in his support statements on the floor of the House said the bill "has balanced the budget of the state. It has funded the Quie shifts, and put in a built-in fund balance, a surplus. It has directed tax relief where it is most needed."

But House Minority Leader David Jennings saw the bill as only a tax-raising measure.

"My summary of the bill says property taxes go up, individual income taxes go up, corporate income taxes go up, and sales taxes go up," said the Independent Republican from Truman.

The bill, HF1259, with the approval of the House and Senate went to the governor for his signature.

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Contact: Sarah Gardner
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Legislators approve new women's prison, music building, Capitol repairs

The Minnesota Legislature's \$122 million omnibus bonding bill includes money for a wide variety of building construction and repairs for the 1984-85 biennium--from badly needed roof repairs at Area Vocational/Technical Institutes (AVTI's)--to a new \$15 million women's prison in Shakopee.

Legislators approved the House-Senate compromise bill May 23, the last day of the legislative session.

The bill includes \$19 million to rehabilitate the State Office Building in St. Paul, which houses legislators and staff; \$400,000 to plan a new State History Center; and \$1.2 million to renovate the Capitol.

Minnesota's post-secondary schools will get a total of \$26,136,300, including AVTI and community college roof repairs, new bleachers at Bemidji State University, and a new \$16 million music building on the University of Minnesota West Bank Campus.

The Department of Natural Resources gets \$19.7 million for improvement and expansion of metropolitan and statewide parks and wildlife management areas. Of that, \$250,000 will fund acquisition of wild, scenic and recreations rivers, canoe and boating routes, portages and camp sites.