



Minnesota Legislature

NEWS RELEASE

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Legislature to retain firm to aid bridge investigation

The Joint Legislative Committee on the I-35W Bridge Collapse has retained the law firm of Gray Plant Mooty to consult during their investigation of the bridge collapse. Following the disaster, the joint committee was established to review bridge-inspection reports, state bridge-inspection practices, and the safety conditions of Minnesota bridges. The joint committee is also charged with investigating the Minnesota Department of Transportation's response to the bridge collapse and determining if the agency has appropriate staffing levels to ensure the safety of Minnesota's infrastructure.

"The joint committee will investigate whether actions by the state's transportation department in any way contributed to this infrastructure failure, while the National Transportation Safety Board investigation will determine what structurally caused the bridge to collapse," said state Sen. Steve Murphy, DFL-Red Wing, the Senate chair of the joint committee. "Our primary concern is the safety of Minnesota motorists, so we need to know if there are changes in practices that will result in safer roads and bridges. Due to the nature of our charge, the committee voted on a bipartisan basis to hire independent staff with the appropriate expertise to assist the committee with its investigation."

Gray Plant Mooty is the oldest continuing law firm in Minneapolis, founded in 1866, and has approximately 160 lawyers serving an impressive roster of regional, national and international clients from their offices in Minneapolis, St. Cloud and Washington, DC. They have received numerous awards and honors, including the 2005 Better Business Bureau Integrity Award; 2005 Minnesota Business Ethics Award (MBEA); and have been named a “Go-To Law Firm” by a 2007 American Lawyer Media survey.

"Bottom line: we don't want another bridge to fail," said state Rep. Bernie Lieder, DFL-Crookston, the House chair of the joint committee and a former county transportation engineer. "The other investigations are looking into the technical reasons for why the bridge failed. We want to look at the decisions about the bridge prior to the failure, what information MnDOT had about the bridge and what was done with that information, as well as review how information about the safety of other bridges is handled."

Senate members of the joint committee are Sen. Murphy, Sen. Jim Carlson (DFL-Eagan), Sen. Scott Dibble (DFL-Minneapolis), Sen. Michelle Fischbach (R- Paynesville), Sen. Mike Jungbauer (R-East Bethel), Sen. Amy Koch (R-Buffalo), Sen. Keith Langseth (DFL-Glyndon), and Sen. Kathy Saltzman (DFL-Woodbury). House membership includes Rep. Lieder, Rep. Ron Erhardt (R-Edina), Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-Minneapolis), Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park), Rep. Shelley Madore (DFL-Apple Valley), Rep. Terry Morrow (DFL-St. Peter), Rep. Neil Peterson (R-Bloomington) and Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids).

For more information, you can contact Sen. Murphy's office at 651-296-4264 or Rep. Lieder's office at 651-296-5091.