

But Minnesota is already a leader in DWI legislation, according to John Berglund, a lobbyist for the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association.

He testified against the bill at a House Judiciary Committee meeting. Berglund argued that the laws currently on the books should be allowed to work to catch the repeat DWI offenders and problem drinkers. And, he said, the state should not target safe, social drinkers.

Berglund and other opponents point to the fact that NHTSA studies also show that the average blood alcohol content found among drunk drivers is 0.18 percent and that 80 percent of all DWIs are over 0.14 percent.

"By shifting the focus away from the alcohol abuser to the moderate, social drinker, we are shifting resources from the real problem," he said. "Changing the legal limit to 0.08 does not get at the problem of the chronic offender, because they ignore the 0.10 limit."

Opponents of the legislation also point to the fact that eight out of the 10 states that ranked lowest in alcohol-related traffic fatalities have 0.10 percent. They argue that if the 0.10 percent standard works so well in these states, there is no need to lower the standard to 0.08 percent.

The debate in Minnesota may become purely academic. A bill supported by the president has been introduced in Congress which would withhold 5 percent of federal highway funding for states that do not set a standard of 0.08 percent.

If the federal legislation passes, Minnesota lawmakers may have to act just to save the highway funding. ❁

Committee deadlines

Each year, the House sets deadlines by which most bills must be heard in a committee and forwarded. At the first deadline, which was Friday, Feb. 13, bills must have been passed out of policy committees in their house of origin.

The second committee deadline is Friday, Feb. 20, and by then all bills other than those containing appropriations must be passed out of policy committees in both houses. The deadline does not apply to the finance divisions of the committees or the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee, the House Taxes Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee.

By the third committee deadline, Friday, Feb. 27, all appropriations bills must clear their policy and finance committees and move to either the Taxes Committee or the Ways and Means Committee.



Wynia realizes value of past in new job as college president

By Nicole Wood

Former Rep. Ann Wynia has found a perfect fit in her new job as president of North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park.

Being a college president wasn't something Wynia imagined she'd do when she grew up, she said in a recent interview.

"I don't fit the typical profile," she said.

But when the opportunity to lead the institution where she has taught since 1970 presented itself last year, she realized the relevance of her legislative and executive branch experience as an administrator.

Wynia was first elected to St. Paul's District 63B House seat in 1976. During her 13 years in the House, she was twice elected majority leader. She was the first DFL woman to hold a leadership position in the House.

Her public service record doesn't end there. Wynia also has been a commissioner of the Department of Human Services and a University of Minnesota regent. She was defeated by Rod Grams in a hard-fought 1994 U.S. Senate race.

In many ways, Wynia said, her new job duties are familiar territory: figuring out competing needs, reconciling available resources, establishing priorities, and working with other people to move an agenda forward.

"That's what you do in the Legislature, and that's a lot of what you do as a college president," she said. "So far it feels like a pretty good fit."

Looking back at her years in the House, Wynia said she found it most satisfying to work on human services issues, particularly on questions of health care access.

In 1987, she sponsored the Children's Health Plan, the first program in the nation to provide basic preventive care to the children of the working poor.

"It was very satisfying to be able to say, because we were able to pass this legislation, literally thousands of Minnesota children who wouldn't have had health care now are able to go see a doctor," she said.

Wynia also recalls that the plan had overwhelming bipartisan support.

"It was an opportunity to work on a problem and to present a reasonable cost-effective solution and to see how, by golly, in this process it is possible to bring that kind of thoughtful solution before a large group of legislators and get them to agree," she said.

In addition to such powerful committees as Taxes and Ways and Means, Wynia served on the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee during her legislative career.

She said she joked with then-Speaker Martin Sabo that she was perfect for the assignment because she was typical of so many Minnesotans — she had a car insurance policy and a home insurance policy and she had never read either one.

"I was a consumer of both banking and insurance services and I brought that perspective to the committee," she said. "That's what I think in some ways is the beauty of the citizen legislature. They're really very much representative of the people of this state."

Wynia also said she is excited about her future at North

Hennepin.

"At a community college, where we provide open-access, affordable education, I have this wonderful opportunity to try to create an educational institution here in the metropolitan area that is going to be of real opportunity for a lot of people to improve their lives," she said. "What a wonderful job to have. I am so lucky."



Former Rep. Ann Wynia takes time out of her busy schedule as president of North Hennepin Community College to reflect on her years in the House.