

Environment and Energy Update

Posted by [Eric F. Swanson](#) on March 25, 2011

Funding Bills Moving

The Environment and Energy omnibus finance bills are on the move! In the Senate, these issues are taken up separately, with the Energy provisions moving through Sen. Rosen's Committee and the Environment issues through Sen. Ingebrigtsen's committee. In the House, a single bill emerged from the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee, and awaits action on the floor. There is one significant difference on energy matters between the House and Senate versions of the bills. The Senate has thus far agreed to the Governor's recommendation for new positions at the Office of Energy Security and the Public Utilities Commission, with the funding for these positions coming from the use of leftover grant funds from the Renewable Development Fund. The House, on the other hand, does not fund any new positions and Representatives are holding a firm line on the issue. The bills will be voted on by the bodies next week and will require a conference committee to negotiate the differences.

Energy Conservation Efforts To Be Discussed

Minnesota's Energy Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) is the target of a few different bills this year and will be vigorously debated. Included among the proposals: HF 1052, HF 1189, and HF 1193, dealing with the obligations of cooperatives and municipalities, as well as large customer exemptions. The Senate has already held one broad stakeholder meeting and received input from coops, munis, investor-owned utilities, the Office of Energy Security, and customer representatives, with a variety of potential changes discussed. With a total annual budget of over \$200 million per year in ratepayer funds flowing through the program, legislators are understandably asking if the current programs are really delivering the most "bang for the buck," or if changes are appropriate and would better spur Minnesota businesses to invest and grow jobs in the state. More discussion of these issues is expected after the budget work gets finalized.