

Minnesota Government Update - Week in Review - April 1, 2010

Posted by [John A. Knapp](#) on April 01, 2011

Marathon Floor Sessions

Many of the 2011 session Omnibus Tax and Appropriations bills were taken up on the House and Senate floors this week. Some moved quickly, such as the agriculture bill, while others with more controversy like taxes, required hours of debate, multiple amendments and even more monologues on the most contentious points. The Senate has taken up and passed omnibus K-12 education, higher education, environment, jobs, state government innovations, health and human services, agriculture, and public safety. The House has passed off the floor omnibus environment, K-12 education, higher education, state government finance, taxes, public safety and transportation bills. After days of over six hour debates, both the House and Senate are taking Friday off from floor sessions and will take up the remaining omnibus bills on Monday.

Omnibus Bills Still to Go

Still to go next week for the Senate are the transportation and tax omnibus bills, while the House still has to tackle health and human services and jobs. All omnibus bills will require conference committees to iron out the differences between the Senate and House versions of the bills. While none of these omnibus bills are expected to be signed by Governor Dayton, they establish a critical starting point for legislators with the Governor's office. The Governor has stated, once an overall budget agreement has been reached, he would like to be presented with a comprehensive omnibus budget bill.

Senate District 66 Special Election

In somewhat of an upset, Mary Jo McGuire won the DFL primary special election held Tuesday in Senate District 66 over the current House District 66B Representative John Lesch. McGuire is a former state Representative, holding office from 1988 until 2002, when she decided not to run again as redistricting would have forced her to run against a fellow long-time DFLer. The general election to replace Senator Ellen Anderson, who was appointed to the Public Utilities Commission, is scheduled for April 12. McGuire's opponent is Republican Greg Copeland, chair of St. Paul's Republican Party. Because it is a historically safe DFL district, McGuire is expected to win.

Governor Dayton Pens Budget Letter

Earlier this week, Governor Dayton wrote an open letter to Senate Majority Leader Amy Koch (R-Buffalo) and Speaker of the House Kurt Zellers (R-Maple Grove) discussing his expectations for budget negotiations moving forward. He outlined a request for a complete balanced budget and stated he would not review a single budget bill unless it was part of the complete budget plan. Governor Dayton also commented on his concerns regarding remarks Republican leaders made as to not trusting or using the fiscal notes provided by the Office of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to determine the impacts of suggested cuts and reforms. The Governor asserted it would be the MMB numbers that would be used in negotiating a final budget. Governor Dayton also said he would not sign budget bills that included policy provisions with no-fiscal impact unless he had specifically agreed to them. He stated "...I will not sign revenue or expenditure bills that include policies, to which I have not agreed, which I oppose, and which should be passed and presented to me as separate legislation. If I reject those items, and therefore the bills containing them have to be returned for separate passage, those delays will be the Legislature's responsibility, not mine."