

Minnesota Government Update - Week in Review

Posted by [John A. Knapp](#) on February 04, 2011

The Viking stadium debate officially began this week. Ted Mondale, the newly appointed Chair of the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission, testified this week in the Senate Committee on Local Government and Elections. He told legislators that Governor Dayton supports a new Vikings facility but believes it is important that the facility be a “people’s” facility and should be able to be utilized year round by a variety of organizations. Governor Dayton appears to be taking a strong interest in Minnesota sports facilities, as his bonding bill included money to do maintenance at Target Center, the home of the Minnesota Timberwolves, and funding for a new St. Paul Saint’s baseball stadium.

The repeal of the moratorium on construction of nuclear power plants (SF4 Koch R-Buffalo) passed off the Senate floor Wednesday on a 50 to 14 vote. DFL Senators Ellen Anderson (DFL- St. Paul), Linda Higgins (DFL-Minneapolis), John Marty (DFL-Roseville) and others made multiple attempts to amend the bill, all of which failed. The companion bill (HF 9) authored by Representative Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers), was previously heard in the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee and re-referred to the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee where it will be heard on Wednesday, February 9, 2011, at 2:30 p.m.

The bill repealing the ban on new electric energy from coal fired power plants, HF 72 authored by Representative Mike Beard (R-Shakopee), cleared its first hurdle passing out of the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Committee on an 11 to 6 vote. The bill now moves to the House Commerce and Regulatory Reform Committee.

Governor Proposes 2011 Bonding Bill

Governor Dayton released his bonding bill on Monday. Governor Dayton described the projects he has selected for the bonding bill as shovel ready or paint and repair projects that focused on downtown revitalization projects. He is describing this bill as a jobs initiative and noted jobs as his reason for proposing a bonding bill this year instead of waiting until next year, as is historically the case. He touted his proposal as extending the hand of compromise to the Legislature, because he listed \$531 million worth of projects and invited the Legislature to add \$500 million in its bonding priorities.

Joining Governor Dayton at the press conference were Ryan Construction workers, U of M Students, Minnesota Management and Budget Commissioner Jim Showalter, the new Assistant Commissioner of the Treasury Division Kristin Hanson, and the Mayor of Rochester Ardell Brede. Included in the bill is the Mayo Civic Center project which the Mayor stated would bring 400 construction jobs, and support for the Mayo Clinic, Minnesota's largest private employer. The other big project discussed was the new technology building for the University of Minnesota. When asked about a bonding bill for next year, Governor Dayton responded he hopes there will not be a need if this year’s bonding bill is adequate. He did not give any “must have” projects. As long as the bill presented to him by the Legislature had quality projects that put Minnesotans back to work, he said he would sign the bill. Some of the projects included in this bill had been vetoed by Governor Pawlenty in prior bonding bills. Republican leaders quickly

dismissed the idea of a bonding bill this year saying it was irresponsible in the face of a \$6.2 billion deficit.

Campaign Finance Reports Released

The Republican party, for the first time since 1972, holds a majority in the Minnesota Senate. End of the year campaign finance reports released this week show the party was able to pull off this historical feat spending significantly less than the DFLers. The Senate DFL Caucus reported raising \$2.5 million while the Republican Senate Victory Fund raised \$910,000. The Senate Victory Fund finished the year with \$100,000, while the DFL Senate Caucus had only \$1,500 remaining. The Republicans also spent less than the DFL in House races but again ended-up with the majority. The DFL House Caucus reported spending \$2.5 million on House races while the Republican Caucus reported only \$1.7 million. It is important to note these numbers only represent part of the funding picture, as they do not include the spending of outside groups. The Republicans hold a 37-30 majority in the Senate and a 72-62 majority in the House.

State Budget Process

A bill making its way through the House would change the way lawmakers balance the state budget. HF 2, authored by Representative King Banaian (R-St. Cloud), would require lawmakers to build the budget from scratch assuming every state agency to have a current budget of zero. Agencies would give input on funding for each individual program they support. The bill passed out of the House Government Operations and Elections Committee and was referred to the House State Government Finance Committee. The Senate companion, SF 146, authored by Senator Roger Chamberlain (R-Lino Lakes), awaits action by the Senate State Government Innovation and Veterans Committee.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, Governor Dayton will give his first State of the State Address on Wednesday, February 9, at noon. The Governor has also stated he will release his budget proposal on February 15, with the February budget forecast due from Minnesota Management and Budget on February 28.

Legislators will recess from 3:00 p.m. on Monday, April 28, until Tuesday, April 26, for the Easter and Passover observances.