

Minnesota Government Update - Week in Review - March 25, 2011

Posted by [John A. Knapp](#) on March 25, 2011

Special Election

Senate District 66 will hold a primary election next week to replace six-term Sen. Ellen Anderson (DFL), who was appointed to the Public Utilities Commission earlier this month. The favorite in the race is current 66A DFL Rep. John Lesch. Rep. Lesch is a prosecutor and is currently serving his fifth term. The general election will be April 12. If Rep. Lesch should win the race, there will have to be another special election to fill his seat.

Tensions High

As committees struggle to craft budget bills, tensions are increasing, and the rhetoric on all sides is getting more heated. When you add in the number of people interested in the issues being debated with the short window of time available for Committees to hear testimony, you have a recipe for conflict. For example, one omnibus bill sparked intense emotion this week as a testifier from greater Minnesota had to be removed from the committee by the Sergeant at Arms for his failure to abide by the Chair's three-minute allowance time for testimony.

Omnibus Bills

The deadline for omnibus bills to be referred to the Ways and Means Committee in the House and the Finance Committee in the Senate is tonight at midnight. Four bills remain to be heard in the Senate (Health and Human Services, Tax, Education, Transportation) and four (Jobs, Agriculture, Judiciary, Public Safety) in the House. Next week, all omnibus bills will be taken up during floor sessions that promise to be long and arduous.

If you're interested in tracking any of the omnibus bills visit <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/> and use the following bill numbers:

- Agriculture: SF 1016 – HF 1039
- Capital Investment: SF 40 – HF1232
- Education: SF 1030 - HF 934
- Environment and Energy: SF 1029 - HF 1010
- Health and Human Services: SF 760 – HF 927
- Higher Education: SF 924 - HF 1101
- Jobs and Economic Growth: SF 887 – HF 1049

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- Judiciary: HF 440
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- Transportation: SF 898 – HF 1140

Governor Updates Budget

The Governor released a new budget this week, taking into account the February forecast that shows increased revenues and a reduction in the deficit to approximately \$5 billion. His two major changes were to eliminate the proposed 3% surtax on incomes over \$500,000 and to reinvest \$170.3 million in health and human services spending. Gov. Dayton also added a proposal for a \$21.8 million increase to the research and development tax credit.

Governor Gives Executive Order

Gov. Dayton issued an executive order this week that requires regular audits of health plans and ensures full public disclosure on health plan profits, reserves and administrative expenses for state contracted health care providers. The Commissioners of Health, Human Services and Commerce, along with Gov. Dayton, announced Minnesota will now have a competitive bidding process for those providing state health care. Payments for health care will now be focused on outcomes rather than procedure. This change is being described as a fundamental shift that will better serve taxpayers.