

Minnesota Government Update - Week in Review

Posted by [Christine M. Zimmer](#) on February 25, 2011

New Regents Elected

After a contentious process that included accusations of partisan politics, the newest members to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents were formally elected on Monday evening by the full Legislature. Former House Speaker Steve Sviggum; Minnesota Power executive David McMillan; David Larson from Cargill, Inc.; and former State Representative Laura Brod were all approved by the Legislature. The controversy stemmed from selection of Laura Brod to the at-large seat over current regent Steven Hunter, who is an AFL-CIO official. With Hunter off the Board, there is no labor representation, as there has been historically. Each member will serve a six-year term.

Governor's Budget Receives Tough Scrutiny

Representatives of the Department of Human Services (DHS) have spent the last two weeks at the Capitol testifying on the Governor's budget recommendations for their agency. The Health and Human Services committees are holding hearings with Department staff to scrutinize the Governor's proposed budget. DHS is responsible for the administration of Minnesota's health plans, child and family services and welfare, chemical and mental health programs, continuing care administration, and Minnesota's sex offender program. While almost everyone agrees most of these programs are necessary, the best way to deliver these programs has been a highly debated topic. Senators and Representatives on both sides of the aisle have raised questions about cuts to one program leading to higher costs in another and the measurable outcomes related to return on investment. DHS has repeatedly answered the question "why this program" with the statement "...these decisions were not made easily or taken lightly this is best we can do..."

AFL-CIO Descends on the Capitol

In solidarity with Wisconsin labor unions, Minnesota members of the AFL-CIO swarmed the Capitol on Tuesday night. Approximately 500 to 1000 union workers and supporters came to the rally. Governor Dayton greeted the crowd saying, "We will stand with you in solidarity." With what is being billed as the largest rally at the Capitol in years, the "solidarity rally for Wisconsin Workers" brought DFL legislators, members of Congress, and city officials to the Capitol to show their support. Governor Dayton's participation in the rally received harsh criticism from Republicans. Tony Sutton, the Republican Party Chairman, issues a statement saying, "Dayton

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should get serious about his home state's finances” and start working with Republican legislators to balance Minnesota's budget.

Bonding Bill Receives Hearing

In a packed committee room, the House Capital Investment Committee held their second only hearing of the session taking testimony on HF 607, authored by Rep. Larry Howes (R-Walker).

The bill appears to include all of Governor Dayton’s proposed bonding program. Testifiers included the cities of Rochester, Mankato and St. Cloud; all have Civic Center projects in the bill. A Hennepin County Commissioner testified on the importance of a new light rail platform and the City of Bloomington described the necessity of a new Lindau Lane set-up for the Mall of America. The bill was laid over.