

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - APRIL 22, 2013

As we begin the final four weeks of the regular Session of the 2013 Minnesota Legislature, the top priority of the legislative leadership is the completion of the 2014-15 budget, thus Committee work is limited for the most part, to finalizing the various Committee Budget appropriations and getting them in balance with the final State Budget Appropriation. There is a lot of work to be done in order to achieve this. It's complicated; it's tedious and most often very confusing even to the experienced observers. First we have the Governor's State Budget recommendations, then both the House and the Senate have prepared their own recommendations for the budget, and the legislative leadership has set established targets for each of the major Committees. These Committees have been meeting and have established their own spending priorities which always don't fit within the perimeters set by their leadership. Committee financing proposals are put into Omnibus Finance Bills in both the House and the Senate and usually they end up establishing a Conference Committee to iron out the differences between the House and Senate approved bills. Then this proposal is sent back to the floor of both chambers who must approve the agreement before it can be sent to the Governor for his final action. You can see why we see a lot of changes day to day over appropriations and even priorities are subject to the negotiation process. And in the final analysis, this is done by a few, without public input, and with the hope of the leaders that they can muster a majority vote and pass something that the Governor is agreeable to signing.

Omnibus bills have been prepared and even re-drafted a number of times this past two weeks with much more to be revealed yet this week. An example of this work is **SF 671** now known as the Omnibus Public Safety Finance Bill. The Senate bill was debated in the House and thus amended before it was adopted by a 122 - 7 vote on 4/19/13, but the Senate refused to agree with the amended bill so a Conference Committee has been named to resolve the remaining issues. Five Senators and five Representatives are named to the Conference Committee and it is assumed they'll be meeting this week to work on this. This bill includes the DOC appropriation for 2014 at \$ 344,750,000 and \$ 348,531,000 for 2015. In addition and of interest to most, is an addition to the CCA funding to Community Corrections of \$ 1,772,000 for 2014 and \$ 1, 773,000 for 2015, plus an additional \$ 242,000 in each year the CPO system.

Conferees include: Senate - Latz, Dibble, Goodwin, Dziedzic, and Limmer
House - Paymar, Hilstrom, Lesch, Melin, and Corniish

HF 1160 the Omnibus Judiciary Finance and Policy Bill, which funds the Court system, was passed by the House on 4/19/13 by a 71 -59 vote. The Senate companion bill, **SF 1029**, was passed 47-18 late last week, and is now considering the Bill passed by the House for comparison. That Bill was again laid on the table today. More to be reported later this week.

There are two Omnibus Bills pending pertaining to Public Pension:

HF 629/SF 489 known as Omnibus Pension Bill # 1 and **HF 1152/SF 1191** is referred to Omnibus Retirement Bill # 2.

These bills are both under Committee review at this point. We have been told there will definitely be some notable changes in public pensions this year which is going to require greater employee contributions and diminishing benefits at the time of retirement. Details will be reported as these proposals move forward.

As of today, April 22nd, there have been 1800 bills introduced in the House and 1627 bills in the Senate. We have been following bills in the following House Committees:

Early Childhood and Youth Development -	53 bills
Judiciary Finance and Policy -	81 bills
Public Safety Finance and Policy -	99 bills

We continue to be very pleased with the progress of bills on our agenda and still look to final passage of several bills of interest.

HF 392 /SF286 our juvenile records bill, has received strong support in both the House and the Senate. They have been approved by at least two committees now and are currently waiting to be placed on the Floor agenda for Floor debate in both chambers. We are led to believe that this will happen; it's just a matter of timing. We have noted bi-partisan support on these bills.

SF 523 the "Ban the Box" bill which would prohibit potential employers from asking about criminal histories in the application process, was passed by the full Senate last Saturday, 4/20/13 and the companion bill, **HF 690**, should be coming up for debate on the House floor in the very near future. This too, has received good bi-partisan support and should reach the Governor's desk this year.

The Juvenile Stay of Adjudication bills **HF 807/SF 1441**, and **HF 633/SF 760**, continue as well to make progress and have been voted through a couple of Committees and we remain hopeful that these will also get to the floor for a final vote yet this Session.

HF 885, the Alcohol Tax increase bill, has become a part of the Omnibus Tax Bill and seems to have a lot of life to it. The disbursement of funds generated by this has been watered down, or diversified if you will, with an expanded list of uses, but still could result as a significant asset if it remains in the Tax proposal.

HF 704/SF 422 is known as the Family Reunification Act of 2013. It's an elaborate bill dealing with child placement issues, that has been receiving a positive response from legislators and we could look for some action on this bill yet this year. It's currently on the General Register and could come up for a final vote any day.

HF 804/SF 643, authorized the DOC to track employment data on released offenders. This bill was incorporated into **SF 745**, the Senate Data Practices bill, and is listed in Sec. 21 of that bill which was passed by the Senate 41 -24 on April 18th.

SF 865 which would establish a five-member Parole Board, and **HF 545/SF 1200**, Emily's Law were both on our tracking system but it doesn't appear either of them will be heard in the current Session.

HF 1096/SF 976 would reinstate an expired program authorizing the release from prison of certain non-violent controlled substance offenders under certain conditions, continue to make progress through hearings and could still be heard on the floor yet this Session.

Once the Budget bills and final determination of a bonding bill are resolved, look for things to move rather quickly as the DFL leadership would like to adjourn earlier than later as they move toward the defined adjournment date of May 20th.

Another legislative report will be prepared for our membership as we observe developments at the Legislature.

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