



SOUND & CLEAR

EDINA - WEST BLOOMINGTON DEMOCRATS

WWW.SD41.DFL.ORG

UPCOMING EVENTS

Edina-West Bloomington Democrats Monthly Meeting

7 to 8:30 p.m.
Mon., July 9
Mon., Aug. 13
Helen Young Room,
Southdale Library

Edina July 4 Parade

10 a.m.
Park at the Edina
Community Center and
meet Democrats along
the frontage road south
of the Perkins
Restaurant at 9:30 a.m.

Annual Picnic

Noon to 3 p.m.
Sat., July 21
Rosland Park shelter,
Valley View Road and
66th Street, Edina
Details on back page.

Edina-West Bloomington Democrats Links

7 p.m.
Fourth Tuesday of
each month
Davanni's, 5124 Gus
Young Lane, Edina

OVERALL EDUCATION FUNDING FALLS SHORT OF HIGH HOPES

The 2007 Minnesota legislative session began with high hopes that public education would be restored to adequate funding. Significant progress was made in adequately funding special education. However, tight budget constraints and lack of support on the part of the governor and Republicans in the Legislature resulted in education funding that fell short overall.

Most of the problem originated in 2003 when Gov. Tim Pawlenty and House Republicans solved a \$4.5



billion budget deficit through massive cuts to state support for education. The 2005 Legislature then passed a K-12 education funding bill with annual increases of 4 percent in 2006 and 2007. This barely kept up with inflation.

In this environment, local school districts had to pony

up the money—if they could—through local levies. Schools across the state have seen larger classroom sizes, as well as program cuts.

From the outset of the 2007 session, the governor's proposed budget and the House and Senate education bills differed significantly. The governors proposed budget called for \$760 million in new money to fund K-12 education in 2008 and 2009. About 40 percent of that total was for

continued on page 2

ENVIRONMENT WINS IN LEGISLATURE

The past legislative session saw some success in energy and environmental issues. First was the Renewable Energy Standard with a goal set for Minnesota utilities to provide 25 percent renewable energy by 2025. This makes Minnesota a national leader in this area.

The Next Generation Energy Act of 2007 addresses energy efficiency, community based energy and greenhouse gas

emissions. This legislation is significant because it sets goals and targets. While it doesn't preclude building the Big Stone II coal plant or the Mesaba coal plant in Excelsior, new power plants can't be built unless their increased pollutants are offset by reductions in pollution from other plants. The Legislature also took a step toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions. An economy-wide climate change



action plan is required to be submitted to the Legislature by Feb. 1, 2008. The goal is to meet interim benchmarks and reduce emissions 80 percent by 2015 and 30 percent by 2025. The

continued on page 5

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Comments?**Suggestions?**

Contact Gwen Ruff,
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E D U C A T I O N C O N T I N U E D

the base per pupil funding formula at the rate of 2 percent increases each year—well below current inflation rates. The base per pupil funding formula is the most important funding source for K-12 education.

Also included in the governor's proposed budget was a meager \$35 million increase in special education funding. Remember, the governor and Legislature froze special education funding in 2003. Not-ably missing from the governor's budget was all-day kindergarten and early childhood family education funding. The governor's budget also had a new "Success-ful Schools" initiative, which would reward already successful schools with additional grant money and promote his vision of high school reform.

The Minnesota Senate's vision for K-12 funding differed dramatically, as its centerpiece was an almost \$500 million increase in special education funding. In a separate bill, the Senate proposed 2 percent annual increases to the base per pupil funding formula. The House bill focused its new funding on 3 percent annual increases to the base per pupil funding formula and a major new commitment of \$94

million for all-day, every day kindergarten. The House also proposed a \$67 million increase in special education funding—more than the governor's proposal, but much less than the Senate's.

The final K-12 and early childhood education package passed by the Legislature and approved by the governor reflected a total increase in education funding of about \$790 million, slightly more than the governor's original budget proposal of \$760 million. Total new money in early education through grade 12 funding was close to the governor's original budget proposal, but its composition was significantly different from the governor's proposal.

Special education got a major increase, although this was essentially repaying a debt. Most major Minnesota education organizations agreed special education funding was the top priority this session. Adequately funding special education means regular education dollars are freed up. The total increase in special education funding was \$330 million for the biennium.

General education got an increase of 2 percent in 2008 and 1 percent in 2009—not enough to keep up

with inflation.

Lack of new money to fund all-day, every day kindergarten was an unfortunate loss. The final bill provides for \$32 million over two years. It's a start, but not nearly enough to do the job.

Pawlenty also line-item vetoed an important provision to set up a legislative commission to study state education funding. This was unfortunate, as the study promised to rationally link standards and expectations of student learning in Minnesota to funding.

Finally, while Pawlenty controlled the purse strings this session, the actual allocation of early childhood, elementary and secondary funding reflected Democratic priorities, shared by most of the major education organizations in the state. The Legisla-~~ture's~~ goal of reducing re-~~liance~~ on special education funding from the general fund, sometimes called the "cross-subsidy," was achieved.

The Democrat-controlled Legislature moved to improve K-12 education funding in the face of a very determined and uncompromising governor.

Peggy Smith

**LEGISLATURE 2007:
THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY**

Thanks to the impressive gains made in the November elections, Democrats had majorities in both houses of the Minnesota Legislature. The result was substantial progress in a number of areas.



Here are some of the most important achievements.

- A reasonable and responsible budget was passed.
- School funding was improved and some money provided for all-day kindergarten.
- Health-care coverage was extended to thousands of Minnesota kids who lack insurance.
- The most ambitious renewable-energy standard in the nation was established.

Much more was attempted, but Democrats lack veto-proof majorities in the House and Senate. So the Republican minority was able to sustain Gov. Tim Pawlenty's vetoes. Republican opposition centered on taxes, as usual.

The most dramatic instance of this was the transportation

bill. It originally included a 10-cent increase in the gas tax. Minnesota hasn't increased its gas tax since 1988, and inflation has eroded its purchasing power by almost 40 percent since then. No wonder numerous roads and bridges are literally falling apart, while other transportation needs remain unmet. Because of Republican obstruction, much of Minnesota's transportation investment will have to wait, as will meaningful property-tax relief and much more. With just a few more Democrats in the House and Senate, much more critical legislation could be passed.

**RON ERHARDT:
PROFILE IN HYPOCRISY**

This year's transportation bill, designed to fund much-needed transportation infrastructure, was a bipartisan bill but only up to a point. Pawlenty and most Republicans railed against the proposed modest gas tax increase needed to pay for the projects. The bill passed with a number of Republicans voting in favor.

Many of Republicans indicated they supported the bill but that they would never vote to override a veto should the governor feel inclined to issue one. They wanted to

have it both ways. They wanted to go on record as supporting a bill that addressed Minnesota's critical transportation needs, so they could brag about it to constituents. However, they didn't intend to support that bill when push came to shove.

Sure enough, Pawlenty vetoed the bill. The House tried to override the veto, which required a two-thirds majority. In this vote, Ron Erhardt, Republican from Edina, initially voted against the override, despite the fact that he was a co-sponsor of the original transportation bill. We're guessing he did this to curry favor with the Republican leadership. Once it was clear Republicans had enough votes to sustain Pawlenty's veto, Erhardt switched his vote, so he could be recorded as voting in favor of improving transportation. No media outlet that we know of covered this double-reverse play, but it was captured on House video cameras.

The only word to describe this kind of game-playing is hypocrisy. The citizens of our district deserve a representative who represents them, not the Republican leadership.

Bill Melton

**OFF THE
BOOKSHELF**

***Reason: Why Liberals Will Win the Battle for America*
By Robert B. Reich**

The former U.S. Labor Secretary argues that the agenda of today's conservatives "is dramatically out of sync with the needs of America and the world." They also have succeeded in depicting liberalism as "a cartoon version of the sixties left." Instead Reich defends classic liberal ideas "that sought to improve the well-being of all people, not just the rich and privileged. Liberalism has stood for an economic system that betters the lives of average working people, and for a democracy that gives voice to the little guy." Traditional voting blocs like minorities, union members, the religious left and single, working and educated women need to be re-energized as the Democratic party's "ground troops," Reich writes. Young people also have to get involved because "increasingly the fault line in American politics will be generational. Who will represent the young?" Reich believes that based on history, "another era of liberalism is on its way. If Democrats can see and feel this resurgence, they will be the party of the future."



Pawlenty's inflation fraud makes the state's financial position appear rosier than it actually is and gives the governor power over spending far in excess of what the state constitution provides.

INSIGHT ON ISSUES: PAWLENTY'S INFLATION FRAUD

Early in June Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed the omnibus tax bill, which included numerous important initiatives enjoying bipartisan support. His main reason for doing so was that the bill also provided that Minnesota would return to honest accounting in preparing its budget forecasts.

Six years ago, the Legislature directed that the official budget forecast would *include* inflation on the revenue side but would *omit* inflation for expenditures. This sleight of hand makes the budget situation appear rosier than it actually is. For example, the state Finance Department's February forecast for the 2008-09 biennium projected a surplus of \$2.2 billion—of which \$1.0 billion was produced by the inflation fraud. That's not chump change! A CEO who knowingly distorted his company's balance sheet this way would risk conviction on fraud charges.

Pawlenty argued that including inflation in projections of expenditures puts government on "autopilot." That claim is flat-out false. A forecast is merely a forecast, not an authorization to spend even a penny. Not only that, but the state's forecast document includes the inflation-adjusted number in the technical details but not in the headline.

The only purpose of the inflation fraud is to make the state's financial position appear to be better than it actually is. Working from such distorted numbers, the governor and Legislature might indulge in excessive tax cuts and spending programs. Therein lies the catch. When the budget begins to run in the red, the governor is authorized to make cuts on the spending side, but not to increase revenues. So, the tax cuts Pawlenty loves remain, while spending—chiefly on education, health care, and transportation—takes the full hit.

Thus inflation fraud gives Pawlenty power over spending that is far in excess of what the Minnesota constitution provides. However, by now

most everyone sees it for the ruse that it really is. The Minnesota Council of Economic Advisers has criticized the fraud since its inception, and this year numerous newspapers editorialized against it. To their credit, Democrats in the Legislature voted—over the squeals of pro-fraud Republicans—to do the right thing and restore honesty in the budget forecasts.

Because of Pawlenty's veto, budget fraud remains on autopilot, but this issue isn't going to go away. If the Democrats manage to pick up a few more seats in the Legislature next year, or if we elect a more principled governor in 2010, this thing is going to be on the fast track to oblivion.

Bill Melton

From the Minnesota DFL website, citing a *StarTribune* editorial:

Gov. Tim Pawlenty heralded news that Minnesotans have dropped from 16th place to 23rd in state and local taxes paid as a percentage of personal incomes, and that the state has fallen from 28th to 31st place in state and local government spending. He says this signals Minnesota "is open for business." But job growth has been dismal since the tax cuts of the late 1990s. For the first time on record, Minnesota's unemployment rate for May exceeded the national average, and its job participation rate fell to the lowest level since the early '90s. *And* Minnesota's economy grew at a sluggish 2.9 percent in 2006, lagging the nation's growth for the second straight year and dropping the real growth of our gross domestic product to 30th among the states. As President Bush might say, "Heckuva job."

E N V I R O N M E N T C O N T I N U E D

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission is directed to estimate and factor in costs of future carbon dioxide regulation when it examines proposals for new power supplies.

“Minnesota assumed its rightful leadership position on driving forward global warming solutions,” says Bill Grant of the Izaak Walton League of Minnesota. “With-in two years, we will have the policies in place to start reversing the trend of ever-growing global warming pollution. It’s the only way we’re going to start tackling this challenge.”

The 2007 Legislature also appropriated more than \$35 million for energy projects. Of that amount, \$15 million is allocated for projects involving bioenergy, biomass electricity, biofuels, plug-hybrid technologies, renewable hydrogen and solar technology.

Another \$17 million is allocated for energy re-search, including funding for a University of Minnesota Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment.

The number of Ethanol 85 stations in Minnesota also will double—from 300 to 600—through a \$3 million legislative allocation.

A NextGen Energy Board will begin meeting in June to develop bioenergy and biofuels policies and to make recommendations.

The Demand Efficiency Initiative will build on Minnesota’s already highly regarded conservation program and will double the amount of energy saved by Minnesota’s utilities as the state puts greater emphasis on energy savings goals. As part of this initiative, the state will have a funded goal of 1,000 Energy Star buildings by 2010.

Dedicating funding to clean up Minnesota’s waters, to protect wildlife habitat and to support park and trail and the arts was tabled this session. Had the Legislature approved this constitutional amendment, the measure would have been put on ballots for voters to decide if they want to raise additional tax revenue. Estimates are that \$100 million is needed for cleaning up the state’s waters and another \$100 million is needed to protect wildlife habitat. An additional \$30 million would need to be raised to support parks and trails and the state’s arts culture

Legislators could resurrect dedicated funding legislation during a special session, and they’ve indicated it will be a priority in the next legislative session.

Jill Crafton

B U S H P O L I C I E S P U S H G L O B A L I S S U E S T O L O C A L L E V E L S

Minnesota is merely one of many states taking the lead in tackling major environmental issues. This emphasis on state action may seem odd, as most of these issues are national or global in scale.

The reason is simple. The Bush Administration has consistently opposed environmental initiatives, even going so far as to try to suppress scientific evidence on global warming. This policy of obscurantism and obstruction has made the United States a virtual outcast among the international community. It also has left state and local governments as the “only game in town” for citizens who are concerned about environmental degradation.



DFL Links connect interested citizens with DFL campaigns and DFL-friendly organizations. They encourage communication between citizens and Democratic party leaders and create a shared sense of community.

In Senate District 41, which encompasses West Bloomington and Edina, the meetings feature speakers on a variety of issues. Of course, there’s always time for socializing.

Edina and West Bloomington DFL Links start at 7 p.m. the fourth Monday of each month at Davanni’s, 5124 Gus Young Lane in Edina.

If you’re curious about DFL Links or have any questions, contact Chuck Prentice at 952-929-8284.

M U S T - S E E
T V

"Democratic Visions" is a half-hour television program produced by the Eden Prairie-Minnetonka Democrats. The show features information about issues, candidates and more. Edina residents can see it on Cable Channel 15 on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 9 p.m.

"Democratic Visions" soon will be broadcast on Bloomington Community Access TV.

N O T E S F R O M T H E D I S T R I C T C H A I R S

Minnesotans have much to be proud of in the past Legislative session. The new Democratic majority in the Minnesota House and the enlarged majority in the Senate accomplished many worthwhile things that are described elsewhere in this issue.

To us the most striking thing was the changed tone of the legislature. The divisive social issues Republicans had championed for years were almost absent. Instead, the Legislature worked hard on issues that Minnesotans really care about.

Much that was done was undone when Gov. Tim Pawlenty vetoed a whole series of bills. Though Democrats were tragically short of having enough votes to override the vetoes, they chose to pass bills as they should be. After the vetoes, they had to work out new bills that the governor would accept. Pawlenty's obstruction greatly increased the amount of work legislators had to do, but the new House and Senate leadership nevertheless managed to complete all business and adjourn on the legally specified date. The legislature hadn't accomplished this particular feat since 1999. Wow! Democrats really showed what they could do!

And yet so much more needs to be done. Achieving it will require veto-proof Democratic majorities. That means we need to pick up just one more Senate seat and five more House seats. Already 2008 is shaping up to be another monster year for Democrats. People are just sick and tired of today's brand of Republicans, from George Bush (especially!) on down.

Here in Edina and West Bloomington, we have our work cut out for us. Our three Republican legislators are part of the problem, not part of the solution. Still, we're excited to get working and optimistic that we can continue our successes. We've got plenty of volunteer jobs—big and small—if you're interested.

So, please put a couple things on your calendar:

- The Edina July 4 parade will include a substantial contingent of Democrats again this year. We encourage you to join us. The parade is always fun, and it's a great way to salute the Declaration of Independence and its glorious embodiment of human rights and liberties. If you want to march with the Democratic contingent, meet us on the east frontage road along Hwy. 100 at 9:30 a.m. If you'd rather cheer from the sidelines, that's OK, too. Just

let everyone know that you're proud to be a Democrat.

- Our Edina and West Bloomington Democratic picnic is set for July 21, a Saturday, from noon to 3 p.m. at the picnic shelter at Rosland Park, just west of the Edina pool off 66th Street. This is great fun, too. Chat and knock back a hotdog or whatever with your Democratic friends. Talk to Democratic candidates and officeholders. Check out our first-ever silent auction. There will be lots of stuff for kids, too. All the details are on the back page of this newsletter. The picnic happens rain or shine, so don't miss it.

One last thing: This newsletter concentrates on the past Legislative session. No Democrat would ever say national and international issues are unimportant, but they're covered extensively in traditional print media and on the Inter-net. Our Legislature hardly ever gets the attention it deserves, and so finding reliable information is difficult. We aim to fill the gap as best we can. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

*Bill Melton, Chair
Eileen McAuley,
Associate Chair*

**DEMOCRATS' CHANCES LOOK GREAT IN 2008;
CONTRIBUTIONS KEEP MOMENTUM GOING**

"There's light at the end of the tunnel."

"A new day is dawning."

Choose your own saying to describe what's happening in Senate District 41. Democrats and others in Edina and West Bloomington are voting in increasing numbers for Democratic candidates. This is no longer a Republican stronghold. The presidential votes for John Kerry in 2004 and for U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar and statewide candidates in 2006 demonstrated that.

Thanks to your financial contributions, your volunteering and committed leadership, this district is having an impact in the political arena.

But we must do more because we have a great opportunity to win even bigger in the 2008 elections. In addition to the presidential race, in Minnesota we will have a Democratic Senatorial candidate to elect.

Locally, we have two Minnesota House races to win. The Republican incumbents supported the Republican governor and that's a negative factor, for many voters. Although we have a Democratic majority in both houses of the Minnesota Legislature we need to make both houses "veto proof." Maximizing our efforts this year and next will pay off sooner than just a little bit later!

How can you help? Volunteer

to work and make a financial contribution now. Take advantage of the Minnesota Political Contribution Refund program. Fill out the form below and mail it along with your check. Our treasurer will send you a receipt and a simple one-page form to mail in for your refund. Your refund check will come directly from the state, usually within six to eight weeks.

Perhaps you've already contributed and received a refund. Say, you can take that refund and make another contribution "out of pocket."

Your contributions are vital. Next year we intend to mount the most effective campaign this district has ever seen.

This will require spending far more than ever before on

communications with district voters, campaign infrastructure and much more.

To get this job done, we have to start early. That's why we need your support now. Truly the times demand that we do our utmost. Numerous recent polls report that a majority of Americans believe this country is on the wrong track. So much is at stake in the world, our nation and right here in Minnesota. We simply cannot fail.

So please write a check and mail it today with the form below. Any questions? Contact me at 952-922-2597 or at billlayton@comcast.net.

*Bill Layton, Chair,
Fund-raising Committee*

Senate District 41 Democrats Contribution Form

Electing Democrats is important. I'm enclosing my (our) check, payable to Senate District 41 Democrats.

\$150 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ Other _____ Please mail my (our) receipt to the address below.

Name _____ E-mail address _____

Phone numbers (h) _____ (w) _____ (cell) _____

Name _____ E-mail address _____

Phone numbers (h) _____ (w) _____ (cell) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zipcode _____

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PLEASE
VOLUNTEER

Our job is to elect Democrats. There's plenty to do between now and the 2008 elections. We've got all kinds of jobs—big and small. If you'd like to help, please call Chuck Prentice at 952-929-8284 to offer your services.

With your help, we can win!

Join us July 21 for our annual picnic

Noon to 3 p.m. Rain or shine!

**Rosland Park picnic shelter,
just west of the Edina swimming pool off 66th Street**

**\$10 for adults, \$5 for youths and seniors
or \$25 per family**

This year's picnic will have an **environmental theme** and feature a representative from the **Will Steger Foundation** and displays on environmental projects and issues.

Democratic candidates for U.S. Senate also have been invited.

Plus we're planning a **silent auction** with donated items. Donations should be in good condition and worth at least \$25. If you'd like to offer something for the silent auction, please call Joellen Deever at 952-842-2559 or contact Wendy Morris at 612-386-4304 or wlmorris@aol.com by July 14.

We would also welcome donations of supplies. Call Ardis Wexler at 952-925-2097 by July 16 if you can donate hot dogs, hot dog buns, chips, soda, water or ice.

