



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

Legislative Notes for the week of May 1 – May 5, 2006

Supplemental Budget Bill Moves Forward in Both Bodies

The House debated the supplemental budget bill on the floor this week. This bill contains finance provisions from the committee omnibus bills, but stripped of all policy provisions. Despite much discussion about the bill not doing enough, the bill did pass the House on 103 – 29 vote. Included in the bill for higher education is \$5 million for academic programs supporting the University of Minnesota, Rochester, and \$100,000 appropriated to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees for systemwide veterans assistance.

The Senate amended its supplemental bill this week to be more compatible with the House bill. The Senate Finance Committee originally passed the supplemental appropriations bill, which included both financial and policy provisions, and sent it to the Senate floor April 18. **Sen. Richard Cohen**, DFL-St. Paul, had the bill stricken from General Orders this week and returned to the Finance Committee for amendments. **Cohen**, chair of the Finance Committee, said after discussions with his House counterpart, **Rep. Jim Knoblach**, R-St. Cloud, that there was concern about the many policy provisions contained in the supplemental appropriations bills. **Cohen** offered an amendment stripping all the policy provisions from the bill, similar to the House. Members adopted the amendment, and the bill was approved. It now heads back to the Senate floor.

Higher Education and Legislative Communities Celebrate John Ostrem's Retirement

Both educators and legislators, past and present, came together at Saint Paul College this week to celebrate the retirement of **John Ostrem**, former government relations director for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. **Ostrem** touched many people in his distinguished career in state service. He was a champion of education, particularly technical education, and helped make technical education in Minnesota what it is today. Those that spoke on behalf of **Ostrem** include **John Kaul**, former lobbyist for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; President **Donovan Schwichtenberg**, Saint Paul College; Chair **Robert Hoffman**, Board of Trustees; **Orley Gunderson**, past president of

Northland Community and Technical College; President **Richard Davenport**, Minnesota State University, Mankato; Rep. **Lyndon Carlson**; former Sen. **Roger Moe**; **Joe Graba**, former director of the Technical College System; and **Morrie Anderson**, former chancellor of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. The evening was an enjoyable celebration of John's 30-year career helping to advance higher education. John's experience, knowledge and sense of humor will be greatly missed.

Legislative Leaders Plan to Adjourn by May 17

Top legislative leaders agreed this week to adjourn this year's legislative session on or before May 17, which is five days before the May 22 deadline set by the Minnesota Constitution. House Minority Leader **Matt Entenza**, DFL-St. Paul, hosted a breakfast at his home for the four leaders, House Speaker **Steve Sviggum**, R-Kenyon; Senate Majority Leader **Dean Johnson**, DFL-Willmar; and Senate Minority Leader **Dick Day**, R-Owatonna. **Sviggum** said the meeting was productive and positive, and they are not that far apart on the bills being brought forward. Stay tuned.

Bonding Conference Committee Meets

The bonding conference committee met Wednesday and again Friday morning to discuss areas where the Senate and House bills are close, which includes higher education. The committee started both meeting discussions with higher education, and **Al Johnson**, associate vice chancellor for facilities, responded to questions from the committee regarding HEAPR and land purchase. In the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities overall request for \$280.4 million, the No. 1 request is \$110 million for HEAPR. Both the House and Senate are at \$55 million for HEAPR. Overall, the Senate is recommending \$213.67 million and the House \$202.75 million for the system's capital budget. The committee adjourned Friday noon and indicated it would reconvene next week, but did not identify when.

U.S. House of Representatives Approves Bill for More Earmark Disclosure

The subject of earmarks in congressional bills has been controversial this session, with earmarks being stripped from appropriations bills. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a lobbying-reform bill this week that requires more public disclosure on earmarks. HR 4975 includes language that requires House bills to be accompanied by a list of all earmarks they contain along with the identities of the lawmakers who requested the appropriations. The House bill falls short of including a provision that is part of the Senate companion, S 2349, which requires explanations of the earmarks' essential governmental purpose. The bill also would allow individual representatives to object to or support specific earmarks and have 10 minutes to state his or her case before a vote would be taken. The bill now heads to conference committee to iron out the differences between the two bills.

Academic Competitiveness Grants and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grants

The Academic Competitiveness Grants and the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grants, known as SMART Grants, were authorized and funded under the Deficit Reduction Act passed earlier this year. Grant funding totaling \$790 million will be available to eligible Pell Grant recipients beginning July 1 for the 2006-2007 award year. The Secretary of Education announced the policies and procedures for the next two academic years. Further details are available at the following link: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/secletter/060502.html>

Majors Eligible for SMART Grants

Third- and fourth-year students who are eligible for Pell grants may qualify for an additional \$4,000 under the new National SMART Grant program if they major in computer science, engineering, foreign language, life sciences, mathematics, physical sciences, technology or certain interdisciplinary fields. Additional information may be found at: <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/GEN0606.html> .

Here's What's Happening at the Capitol:

This schedule shows all meetings that we are aware of at the time of publication that MAY have an impact on the system. This schedule may change. Please watch the House and Senate schedules posted on the Legislature Web site (www.leg.state.mn.us).

11:00 AM

Senate in Session

12:00 PM

House in Session

***Please note that schedules are changing quickly. You may check updated schedules at <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/sched.asp>.**