

**From:** "Emily Shively" <Emily.Shively@senate.mn>  
**Subject:** Legislative Update from Senator Sandy Pappas, Week of March 27, 2006  
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Legislative Update for the Week of March 27, 2006

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#### 1. Welcome

Welcome to my bi-weekly legislative electronic newsletter. Every two weeks I'll send you an update on what has happened in the Minnesota Senate. This is a great way for me to stay in touch with you and I look forward to keeping you abreast of all the topics of the day. I'll be providing you with details about my own legislative proposals and activities related to the Higher Education Budget Division, which I chair.

In the past I have attached a review of senate activity that covers all of the committees and floor sessions. However, since this is usually a fairly large attachment, some people have had a hard time opening it or the email takes up too much mailbox space. I will no longer be sending this as an attachment; instead, it will be posted on my senate web page under "Reports" <http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/senators/65Pappas/reports/>.

#### 2. News from the Capitol

The Senate took action on quite a few big topics in the past two weeks, and you can expect more news as we get closer to the end of session. The Senate approved legislation to reform eminent domain, including clarification of what constitutes public use or blight. While I support the effort to clearly define eminent domain powers. I voted against the final bill, however, because I am worried that the version which passed in the House is much too restrictive, and could prevent cities from cleaning up blighted properties. I hope that a fair compromise will be worked out between the House and Senate.

We also passed a proposal for a constitutional amendment to provide dedicated funding for arts and culture programs, water cleanup, and fish and wildlife. The bill would propose a constitutional amendment for voters to consider in the fall 2006 election. If approved, the sales tax would increase by 3/8 of a percent to provide a steady funding stream for these projects. I am hopeful that this proposal will solve our problems with inconsistent funding for these programs.

The Senate continues to toss around quite a few different stadium bills, targeting the Gophers, Twins and Vikings. We have many different options in play so that when it's crunch time we can decide which ones are affordable. While I definitely want to see the Twins stay in Minnesota, I don't want to build an expensive sports stadium with taxpayer money at the cost of under-funding our vital commitments to education, transportation and health care. Furthermore, I don't wish to see a tax imposed on Hennepin county, or any other county, without the voters having a referendum on the issue.

We've been visited in the Capitol by many groups, lobbying and adding life to the atmosphere. In addition to watching the rallies for housing and GLBT rights, I spoke at the rally for the DREAM Act. It is extremely encouraging to see so many people taking an active role in their state government. Sadly, I was ill and not in the office for the Early Childhood Day, but I have been enjoying the colorful paper flowers created by our youngest citizens. The beautiful arrangements have helped bring spring right into my office!

#### 3. Update on my Bills

Many of my legislative priorities for the session are making progress through the complicated system. The DREAM Act was included in the Higher Ed supplemental financing bill, which will now move to the Finance committee. My proposal for comprehensive family life and sex education was laid over for inclusion in the Education committee's omnibus bill. The human trafficking bill has been approved by two committees and now waits in the Finance Committee. The Climate Neutral Bonding Bill, after passing through two committees, was heard and laid over for possible inclusion in the Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division.

#### 4. Higher Education

The Higher Education Budget Division heard the new proposal for an on-campus Gopher stadium involving a land swap between the University of Minnesota and the State. Among all of the testifiers, we were lucky to hear from University President Bruininks and Coach Glenn Mason. Several members of the committee expressed hope that we could find funding for a Gopher stadium without resorting to deals like the land swap, student fees and selling the stadium naming rights.

This past week we put together the Higher Ed Supplemental Appropriations bill, also known as our committee's omnibus bill. The bill is crafted with policies to reduce student debt, to guarantee that Minnesota veterans returning from military service will qualify for in-state tuition, and to grant in-state tuition to individuals who have relocated to Minnesota and had their post-secondary education interrupted by a natural disaster. The DREAM Act was also included in the omnibus bill. Finally, the bill would provide additional funding for the U of M and the MNSCU system above their appropriations from last session and provide additional student grant aid. Due to a very tight budget, however, I am uncertain as to whether our recommended increase will last once we get to the full finance committee.

#### 5. Get involved!

As always, I encourage citizen input and involvement in the legislative process. There are many ways to do this, and I would like to suggest a few to you.

\*Contact the Senate Information Office (1-888-234-1112) or House Information Office (1-800-657-3550) with any questions related to legislation or state government. Both offices provide weekly publications highlighting each body's actions. The Senate Briefly is available online at [www.senate.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us), and the House's Session Weekly is available by mail. Call the House Information Office to subscribe.

\*Go to [www.leg.state.mn](http://www.leg.state.mn) for a wealth of information pertaining to the Minnesota legislature.  
\*Visits to the Capitol are also encouraged. To set up a Capitol tour, call (651) 296-2881. A day at the Capitol during session can also include watching floor sessions in the Senate and House galleries. Daily schedules are available on the legislative website.

\*Schedule a coffee party! Call my office for details.

\*I always look forward to hearing from citizens. Please feel free to send your comments, questions and ideas to me by mail at:  
120 State Capitol  
75 Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155,  
or by email at [sen.sandy.pappas@senate.mn](mailto:sen.sandy.pappas@senate.mn), or by phone at (651) 296-1802.

I am pleased to see such a great response to these electronic updates, and I appreciate all your comments and input.

Best regards until next time,

Sandy Pappas

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If you do not wish to receive future updates, please reply to this email and type "remove from list" in the subject line. Thank you!

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