

# ewaldatthecapitol

March 6, 2015

## Impact of the February Forecast

Discussion this week was focused on the February forecast, which was released on Friday, Feb 27. That forecast showed a \$1.87 billion surplus over the next biennium. Gov. Mark Dayton indicated that he would like to see some of the surplus used to fully fund his universal preKindergarten program and to institute a tuition freeze for the University of Minnesota. House Republicans indicated the budget surplus should cease any discussion about an increase to the wholesale gas tax and that they would like to see some of the surplus returned to the taxpayers in the form of tax relief. They did not specify an exact figure to be returned, however.

State officials have been answering questions regarding the budget surplus from legislators all week, and this will continue until both the House and Senate release their budget targets for each committee. These targets will provide insight into what area each chamber will seek to invest the most in over the next few months. The targets are expected by the end of the month.

## Committee Deadlines

The legislative session has several important dates that are coming up quickly. Friday, March 20 is the first committee deadline, by which date all committees must act favorably on bills in house of origin, meaning the House and Senate must pass bills that are introduced in their respective chambers. The second committee deadline is Friday, March 27, and this

requires all committees to act favorably on bills that met the first deadline from the other chamber. The last committee deadline, Monday, April 27, is when committees must act favorably on any major appropriation or finance bills. The Legislature will go on spring break from Saturday, March 27 until Noon on Tuesday, April 7. Finally, in accordance with the Minnesota State Constitution, the Legislature has until Monday, May 18, to finish all work for the session.

## Election of U of M Board of Regents

The University of Minnesota has a 12-member board that votes on many issues affecting the school's policies and budget. The elections take place every two years, and are staggered so that only one-third of the board is elected at a time. This year there were five openings because a member passed away with two years remaining on his term.

Election results for each district:

- 1st District: Patricia Simmons, a physician at the Mayo Clinic, enters her third term
- 3rd District: Darrin Rosha, veteran and graduate from U of M Law School, enters his first term and will serve remaining two years of the six-year term
- 4th District: Richard Beeson enters his second term
- 6th District: Michael Hsu, Executive Director for TeeMaster Corp., enters his first term

## They said it:

*"The Legislative Budget Office is needed to ensure full independent analysis of proposals and budgets before the Legislature."  
- Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt (R-Crown)*

## Ewald Government Relations Team

Feel free to contact any member of our team:

David Ewald  
651-290-6276  
[davide@ewald.com](mailto:davide@ewald.com)

Nick de Julio  
651-290-6286  
[nickd@ewald.com](mailto:nickd@ewald.com)

Valerie Dosland  
651-265-7857  
[valeried@ewald.com](mailto:valeried@ewald.com)

Eric Ewald  
651-290-6266  
[erice@ewald.com](mailto:erice@ewald.com)

Patrick Lobejko  
651-290-7473  
[patrickl@ewald.com](mailto:patrickl@ewald.com)

Jess Myers  
651-290-7465  
[jessm@ewald.com](mailto:jessm@ewald.com)

Becca Pryse  
651-265-7858  
[beccap@ewald.com](mailto:beccap@ewald.com)

Katie Wilkerson  
651-288-3427  
[katiew@ewald.com](mailto:katiew@ewald.com)

Owen Wirth  
651-288-3438  
[owenw@ewald.com](mailto:owenw@ewald.com)

## Key Legislative Contact Info

House Information Office  
651-296-2146

Senate Information Office  
651-296-0504

State Legislature Website  
[www.leg.mn](http://www.leg.mn)

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- 7th District: Thomas Anderson, funeral home director, enters his first term

## House Votes on Teacher Layoff Policies

On Thursday, House Republicans passed what they have called their most important education legislation for this session. The bill ([HF 2](#)), chief authored by Rep. Jenifer Loon (R-Eden Prairie), reforms the tenure-based system when school districts face teacher layoffs and also aims at streamlining the process for out-of-state teachers to be licensed in Minnesota. The bill was supposed to be heard on the House floor last week — but after a controversial fiscal note that said this would impact the Department of Education and Board of Teaching by \$895,000, House leadership pulled the bill from the floor to evaluate the fiscal impact in the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill passed late Thursday evening on a 70-63 vote. The bill now waits to be acted on in the Senate, where Sen Terri Bonoff (DFL-Minnetonka) is the chief author.

## Legislative Budget Office

When the legislature proposes laws that may have a fiscal impact, the relevant state agency or department will prepare a fiscal note determining the predicted cost of the legislation. Because the leaders of state departments and agencies are mostly appointed by the governor, there are times when the legislators question the legitimacy of these fiscal notes.

As a result, House and Senate leaders are proposing a bill that would require state departments, agencies, and the Supreme Court to report information to a legislative budget office. The bill is sponsored by Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt (R-Crown) and Majority Leader Joyce Peppin (R-Rogers) in the House ([HF 1281](#)) and by Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) in the Senate ([SF 1304](#)). Gov. Dayton has spoken negatively about the proposal, saying it is unwarranted and unnecessary to the process. Both the House and Senate bills were introduced on Monday and have yet to be acted on by either body.