

ewaldatthecapitol

December 5, 2014

November Forecast Shows \$1.037 Billion Surplus

On Thursday, December 4, officials with the Minnesota Management and Budget Office delivered good news to lawmakers and others, announcing Minnesota will have a \$1.037 billion surplus heading into fiscal years 2016-17 along with a \$556 million balance left at the end of the 2014-15 budget cycle. A new state law passed by lawmakers directs \$183 million of the \$556 million surplus to the state's budget reserve, leaving the 2014-15 budget cycle with a balance of \$373 million.

The FY 2016-17 forecast shows a total of \$1.037 billion available for upcoming budget. FY 2016-17 revenues are now forecast to be \$41.880 billion, which represents a 6.4 percent increase over the current biennium. Current law forecast spending is \$41.243 billion, 4.8 percent above FY 2014-15. Both are lower than previous projections. The \$373 million ending balance for FY 2015 is added to resources for the next biennium, resulting in a \$1.037 billion balance.

Review the [forecast and other documents](#).

2015-2016 House Committee Schedule Set

With a month until the start of the 89th Session of the Minnesota State Legislature, we now know how the committee schedule for the new House majority will look. House floor sessions

will take place on Monday and Thursday at 3:30pm. No meetings will be regularly scheduled on Friday and most committee meetings will end by 4:15pm on Tuesday and Wednesday. View a [copy of the schedule](#).

House Republican Caucus Assistant Leaders and Whip Elected

On Tuesday, December 2, the House Republican Caucus elected its new majority caucus whip and assistant leaders. Tuesday's election fills out the last few remaining leadership positions in the caucus before the start of session on January 6. Rep. Dan Fabian (R-Roseau) is majority caucus whip; the six assistant majority leaders are: Rep. Dave Baker (R-Willmar); Rep. Ron Kresha (R-Little Falls); Rep. Deb Kiel (R-Crookston); Rep. Kathy Lohmer (R-Stillwater); Rep. Chris Swedzinski (R-Ghent); and Rep. Tim Sanders (R-Blaine).

House GOP Leadership Staff Announced

We learned this week that key GOP House senior staff has been put in place. The next step will be for committee administrators and legislative assistants to be hired. To date, here is the staff in place:

Executive Director: Ben Golnik
Legislative Director to the Speaker: Bobby Patrick, VI
Committee Administrators' Coordinator: John Reynolds

They said it:

"I hate to call them overflow outhouses, because those are two words you don't want to put together, but that's what they are."

- Vic Thorstenson, Minnesota Senate Project Manager, discussing the restoration and steps being taken to keep the capitol accessible as long as possible.

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Executive Assistant to the Majority Caucus: Tom Erickson
Director of Research: Dan Dwight
Executive Assistant to the Majority Leader: Kelly Hansen

Upcoming Meetings

Over the next few weeks, a number of committees and task forces will meet to wrap up work as well as preview upcoming work during the 2015 Session. View the [latest meetings at the combined House and Senate calendar](#).

Capitol Restoration: What it Means for the Upcoming Session

Over the past year, work on the State Capitol has progressed as the exterior of the building has been restored from years of Minnesota weather. This past spring (after session), the heart of the project began with workers now focused on the interior of the building. This work has caused what you might call an inconvenience for the public and those who work in the building. For the past few months, the east wing has been completely shut off and all the offices and rooms have been cleared out as redesign and restoration begins. For the most part, much of that work has happened during the quiet time.

However, when session starts on January 6, the building will have a different feel — and it could cause some headaches and many inconveniences for those making their way to St. Paul. Capitol goers will find the rotunda completely shut off and the governor's offices and attorney general's offices vacated. One of the biggest changes may be the restrooms. Nearly all of the restrooms have been taken out during the work and mobile bathrooms (think concerts and festivals) have been brought in for the session. One bonus: they will be heated!

While many rooms and offices have been cleared out, both the Senate and House galleries along with three hearing rooms will remain open for 2015. The layout for 2016 is still to be determined — but it is anticipated that the entire Capitol could be closed. While there will be some heartburn these next two sessions, the payoff will be amazing when the building completely reopens in 2017.

For more details on the project and to follow the progress, please check out the [Minnesota Department of Administration's webpage](#) on the project.