



# State Senator Terri Bonoff

*Capitol Update #1  
January 27, 2012*

## **2012 Legislative Session Begins**

Senators returned to Saint Paul on Tuesday to kickoff the 2012 Legislative Session. Opening remarks were offered on the Senate Floor by newly-elected Senate Majority Leader David Senjem (R-Rochester), who welcomed three new members to the “Senate Family” and spoke of the need for cooperation and a focus on jobs and economic growth after a tumultuous session and government shutdown in 2011.

## **Sunset Commission**

Over the interim, I was appointed to serve on the Sunset Commission. This Commission was created at the end of the 2011 Legislative Session to review and make recommendations on all boards, commissions and state agencies on a 12-year cycle. Each group was asked to prepare a report detailing their work, where their funding comes from, and how they prioritize the spending in their budget. The Sunset Commission is then tasked with making recommendation on whether the board/agency should be “sunsetting” – which would require all operations to shut down over the course of a year and mandated duties to be transferred to another agency. The Commission can also make recommendations on potential changes in duties or reforms that should be implemented.

This year, various licensing boards, commissions, and councils representing minority groups and the disabled community came before the Sunset Commission for review. After roughly 35 hours of hearings over the last two and a half months, we have come together this week around a package of recommendations that have bipartisan support. As this update is written, we continue to nail down the particulars of our recommendations, but Republican and Democratic members have agreed on recommendations that will ensure these groups are adapting new efficiencies, utilizing proper financial controls, and acting as stewards of taxpayer and licensing dollars.

## **Teacher Licensure Exam Legislation Debated in Education Committee**

In contrast to last session, when weeks passed before bill hearings in the Senate Education Committee, legislation was taken up the first day of session that would require that teachers seeking to be admitted into a teacher preparation college program pass the MN Teacher Licensure Exam before being admitted.

Committee members heard from representatives of the teacher preparation colleges that the requirement that college freshman and sophomore students pass the test for entrance into a program might diminish the pool of candidates and disproportionately affect minority candidates. This works against successful efforts from last session that were intended to draw more minority candidates into teaching and open pathways to teaching for non-traditional teachers.

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Ultimately, the legislation was laid on the table and efforts continue to find compromise language that would provide the opportunity for candidates to begin their education while ensuring teachers entering the classroom have passed the test and met all basic skills requirements.



On Monday, I joined fellow legislators and representatives of the Association of Minnesota Counties at a press conference in support of the MAGIC Act, a bill that would provide local governments the flexibility to pursue innovative ways of providing services. For more information, click [here](#).

### **OneMN Conference and the Senate Reform and Redesign Subcommittee**

On Wednesday, I was joined by Republican and Democratic colleagues from the House and the Senate at the annual One Minnesota conference. For the first time, I had the opportunity to help organize the conference along with staff from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a small bipartisan group of legislators who have focused much of their work in the area of public sector reform and structural redesign.

This working group met over the interim to come together around a bipartisan reform agenda for the 2012 Legislative Session. The One MN conference was an opportunity for us to increase the scope of this effort and involve the whole of the Legislature in this ongoing work. Senators and Representatives heard from state and national leaders in the area of public sector redesign and ended the day with breakout sessions focused on different areas of state government and intended to produce actionable proposals for the 2012 Legislative Session.

I was very excited to hear that we were also successful in establishing a new committee to hear proposals that come forward related to reform and redesign. The Senate Reform and Redesign Subcommittee will be structured under the State Government Committee and will provide a permanent venue for this important work to continue as we enter the 2012 Legislative Session.

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### Vikings Stadium

I am sure many of you are wondering about the status of efforts to construct a new Vikings Stadium in Minnesota. There appears to be little momentum for stadium proposals in the opening days of the session. While proponents seem to be coming together around a potential state funding source (electronic pull tabs) and a stadium location (near current Metrodome site), barriers remain to identifying a local funding source because of the Minneapolis city charter's requirement that a referendum be held if the city's share in stadium costs exceeds \$10 million. I will be sure to update you on the progress of any stadium proposal that moves forward this session.

### The Path Ahead

As described above, the opening day of Session began on a positive note. I feel compelled to include, though, that from there the tone of the day turned downward. Only half an hour after the floor session ended, GOP leaders called a Rules Committee hearing where they proposed a disproportionate cut to the minority staff. This came as quite a shock and many called into question the fairness of such a proposal. I am hopeful that this proposal will not be the last word. Senator Bakk and I will continue to work with GOP leadership to resolve this in a fair and equitable manner. It would be extremely unfortunate for our body to lose the sense of trust and collegiality that is so critical at times like these.

This Session, you can count on me to keep my eye on what is best for our great State of Minnesota. It is an honor to be back and a privilege to serve.

Warm Regards,



State Senator

**Terri Bonoff**

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[www.senate.mn](http://www.senate.mn)