



State Senator Terri Bonoff

Capitol Update #19
May 20, 2011

Legislative Impasse Looms

With just 3 days left in the 2011 legislative session, Republican legislative leaders and Governor Dayton remain deadlocked in budget negotiations on how best to manage a projected \$5 billion budget deficit. On Monday, Governor Mark Dayton offered a compromise to reduce his proposal to raise revenue by half and address the other half with spending reductions. Republican leaders quickly rejected this offer and reiterated that they are unwilling to compromise on their position that we must address the projected shortfall with budget cuts alone.

Republican committee chairs then moved quickly on Tuesday to begin passing their eight remaining budget bills out of conference committees and back to the floors of the House and Senate for final approval. Over the next two days, all remaining budget bills were debated and passed off the Senate Floor. These large budget bills were passed on party-line votes.

I do want to share with you why I opposed these budget bills as a whole. I believe that the overall cuts proposed in the areas of Health and Human Services and Higher Education in particular are too deep. If we agree to one budget area today, education for example, then the remaining budget areas are limited to what is left. I do not believe it is prudent to tie our hands prematurely by agreeing to one large segment of the budget before we reach agreement on a comprehensive solution to the shortfall we face. The Governor has made this his position, and I share that view. I continue to advocate for a blend of revenue and cuts. I point to an editorial in today's Star Tribune written by the publisher, Mike Sweeney (<http://bit.ly/mvhYZs>). Mr. Sweeney effectively articulates that the will of the people is for compromise.

Because of the limited time made available for public comment on these final budget bills, Senate Democrats held a hearing on the impact of the proposed cuts on Thursday. We heard from disabled citizens that would lose their independence and in-home care because of cuts to Personal Care Assistants and other home support. The Minnesota Hospital Association told Senators to prepare for 13,000 to 18,000 lost jobs resulting from health care cuts alone. College students from campuses around the state stressed that higher education isn't Minnesota's budget problem; it should be the solution. It's the key to creating jobs and educating tomorrow's workforce – goals that will suffer if state funding for higher education is slashed to levels not seen in over 10 years.

Governor Dayton and legislative leaders will continue working through the weekend to try to reach compromise before the Monday deadline to adjourn. As this update is being sent, we continue our work on the Senate Floor, processing remaining non-budget bills ahead of the adjournment date.

CAPITOL UPDATE

State Senator Terri Bonoff - District 43

For those of you who have been frequent readers of these updates, I imagine you have your own opinions and ideas on how best to end this session. Now is the time to make sure we hear your voice. I welcome your ideas. We will send an End of Session Update after the Legislature adjourns next week.



Josh Mertens, a Senior at Wayzata High School, came by the Capitol for a visit to discuss current issues for his Modern Problems class. I thank the many students who came by the Capitol this session to visit.

Terri Bonoff



State Senator

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For a full and updated list of the status of all Senate bills go to:
www.senate.mn