



## State Senator Terri Bonoff

*Capitol Update #3  
January 21, 2011*

### **Expedited Early Medicaid Opt-In**

Governor Dayton announced that eligible Minnesotans will begin receiving improved Medicaid benefits March 1, under an expansion of the state's Medical Assistance (MA) program. The move speeds up --by a full seven months -- the early Medicaid starting date anticipated by the previous administration. At no additional cost to the state, the action will have an immediate effect on Minnesota, providing better health care coverage to 95,000 Minnesotans and ultimately lowering the cost of care. Thank you to the hard work done by all to make this happen. This provides us a good lesson into what is possible when we all pull together.

### **Early Budget Bill Proposes Cuts**

We all agree Minnesota is facing a serious budget challenge and we will need to make significant spending reductions in the months ahead to bring the state's budget into balance. House and Senate GOP leaders unveiled their budget cut bill this week that includes close to \$1 billion in cuts.

These cuts are largely extensions of one-time cuts made by the Governor and legislature last session. However, in the last budget cycle, Minnesota and local counties received a one-time budgetary cushion in the form of federal stimulus dollars. As we wrestled with the state's budget deficit late last session, we were able to use this one-time infusion of cash to backfill many of the cuts made to critical safety net programs, both at the state and local levels. Now that those federal dollars are gone, continuing these cuts will have a real impact on the ability of counties to deliver necessary services to vulnerable Minnesotans.

Specifically, the bill cuts around \$200 million from our colleges and universities and \$460 million in Local Government Aid. The bill would also reduce property tax refunds for renters by an average of \$170 per person and eliminate the tax refund entirely for 19,000 Minnesota renters, according to the Minnesota Department of Revenue. There is also \$70 million in cuts to Minnesota's health care safety net programs, including new cuts to both General Assistance Medical Care and Medical Assistance. It is my hope that the early MA expansion will mitigate the effects of these cuts.

**CAPITOL UPDATE**

## State Senator Terri Bonoff - District 43

Governor Dayton will release his budget on February 15<sup>th</sup>. While this first cut proposal only codifies what was done last session, we should put forward a complete budget proposal so that we can accurately assess the merits of what is being recommended. It is impossible to provide oversight and counsel as a legislator if you can not see the entire picture. That is what I will demand from my colleagues in this process and I hope you will join me in making this request.

### Secretary Duncan Comes to Minneapolis



U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan addressed a 600-person audience today at the Minneapolis Hilton. He delivered an inspiring message, demanding that we Minnesotans respond with urgency to the very important mission of educating our children to compete and excel in this challenging global environment. He delivered strong words demanding we end all complacency and expect the very best for each and every student.

The audience was filled with business people, educators, community members and elected officials. The importance of this luncheon was underscored by the presence of Governor Dayton, Senator Klobuchar, Mayor R.T. Rybak and so many other great community leaders. I was honored to join a legislative panel following both Secretary Duncan's remarks and an esteemed panel of business leaders. We were united in our commitment to begin with early childhood education and not stop until we deliver a world class education, evidenced by strong academic and civic achievement to each and every student.

### Capitol Security

In the aftermath of the Arizona shooting tragedy, I joined Gov. Dayton and legislative leaders this week to discuss security at the Minnesota State Capitol. The State Patrol, which heads Capitol Security, took part in the discussion on how to keep the building safe for the visiting public and government officials.

Central to the discussion was a 2009 Report by the non-partisan Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA), which found that there are clear and known security vulnerabilities within the Capitol Complex that need to be addressed. The OLA stated that Capitol Security needs emergency response plans, more law enforcement presence, and better employee policies. At the time, the OLA recommended that a task force be established with all three branches of government to address these security issues.

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In this meeting we agreed to activate a committee to review State Capitol security measures and make recommendations within six weeks, allowing time for improvements to be adopted in the 2011 legislative session. All leaders agreed that the Capitol must provide a safe, but open and welcoming, environment for Minnesotans.

### Minnesota Senate Tax Committee Passes Conformity Legislation

The Senate Tax Committee took up Senate File 47 (Ortman) on Thursday and passed it to the floor. It puts Minnesota in conformity with some of the federal tax changes that were a result of federal health care changes allowing insurance coverage for dependents to adult children up to age 26. With W-2's currently being prepared for employees, passage of conformity measures should be made as soon as possible. The bill, as it stands now, only conforms to tax year 2010.

### Legislative Survey

I hope you will follow the link below to this week's Legislative Survey. We will be changing the survey question each week in order to learn your thoughts as policies are discussed.

<https://surveys.senate.mn/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=16LI9m6>

Sincerely,



State Senator

**Terri Bonoff**

325 Capitol, St. Paul MN 55155

651-296-4314 [sen.terri.bonoff@senate.mn](mailto:sen.terri.bonoff@senate.mn)



For a full and updated list of the status of all Senate bills go to:

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