January 11, 2013

The 2013 Legislative Session was called to order on Tuesday. Senate rules have prohibited me from sending updates up until now. You can expect to receive these updates weekly during the legislative session. I hope that you find them informative.

I am honored to serve as your state senator for another term and look forward to representing you and your family in Saint Paul. I was also honored to be elected by my colleagues to serve as the Senate Assistant Majority Leader. In addition to my leadership role, I serve as the chair of the Elections Subcommittee and as a member of the Finance, Rules and Administration, Environment and Energy and Capital Investment Committees. As always, please feel free to contact me at anytime.

Here is a picture of me receiving my election certificate shortly after being sworn in on Tuesday.

Minnesota’s economy will be focus of 2013 session

As the first week of session comes to a close, my colleagues and I are eager to address the state’s significant challenges, which include a $1.1 billion deficit, $1.1 billion in debt to schools, and an outdated tax system that is not as efficient as it should be to support families and encourage job growth.

We agree it is time to put aside partisan showdowns and chart a different course for Minnesota. Although we face significant challenges, we also have an opportunity to build a more prosperous state for our citizens.

April 19, 2013

The Senate made significant progress toward building a responsible budget with a balanced approach that makes critical new investments, smart reforms and strategic cuts this week. In the coming weeks, we will finalize a fair and honest budget that delivers on our priorities for the 2013 session – strong schools, a growing economy, and a thriving middle class. I encourage you to follow the legislative action at the Capitol between now and this session’s adjournment. Please reach out to my office to share your budget priorities.

This week, I was able to meet with constituents from the American Cancer Society, as well as Minnesotans United for All Families. The Senate also spent many hours on the floor this week.

Senate Passes Four Finance Bills

The Senate was in full swing this week as it passed the higher education, state departments, environment, agriculture and jobs and judiciary finance bills. Three of the four bills received strong bipartisan support as most senators agreed that the state needs to invest in higher education, jobs and a more efficient judicial and corrections system.

Many of these budgets have seen major reductions over the past ten years and are in dire need of renewed state support. With a balanced approach that makes critical new investments, smart reforms, and strategic cuts the Senate’s budget strives to improve the quality of life across Minnesota while also pushing cost-saving reforms that ensure taxpayers are getting the best value for their investment.

The Senate’s work did not end on the Senate floor. Several committees were still hard at work as the health and human services, E-12 education, transportation and tax budget continue to be crafted and discussed.

Environment, Jobs and Agriculture Omnibus Finance Bill

The Senate also passed its Environment, Economic Development and Agriculture budget bill this week. The legislation invests in measures that create jobs, make Minnesota a more competitive place to do business, and ensure the protection of our natural resources and rural economy.

Two provisions that I worked hard on are included in the bill. One component provides resources for the continuation of perfluorochemical biomonitoring in...
the east metro. Further, this bill allocates $7.5 million to the Department of Natural Resources for its continued efforts in dealing with aquatic invasive species.

In addition, the legislation also lays out funding for grants in agriculture research and education, and the use of Minnesota-made solar panels and broadband expansion in areas without or with limited services.

The Environment, Economic Development and Agriculture budget bill is crafted to be as comprehensive as possible. This legislation has many good investments and initiatives that respond to Minnesotan’s shared priorities and get people back to work.

**Senate Passes Bipartisan Investment in Higher Education**

The Senate passed the omnibus higher education budget bill this week on a 46-18 vote, demonstrating our bipartisan commitment to each and every Minnesota student. The bill increases student grants, puts strong cost controls in place, and connects our post-secondary education to the workforce demands of tomorrow.

While there is much to praise within our state’s higher education institutions, the cost of going to these institutions is clearly on an unsustainable path. After more than a decade of cuts and tuition hikes, this bill will invest an additional $263 million into Minnesota colleges and universities and the State’s student grant program. In particular, the bill also invests $42.6 million to freeze tuition at the University of Minnesota for the next two years, appropriates $80 million to fund college student aid and increase the amount of each grant available to all Minnesotans, utilizes performance funding metrics to ensure that universities and colleges are providing relevant post-secondary degrees in an efficient manner, and puts forward proposals to study how mentoring can be used to keep students enrolled, increase graduation rates, and provide financial counseling.

The proposal is expected to be referred to a Senate-House conference committee and would still face a final vote by the legislature before being sent to the Governor’s desk.

**Tacos for a Cause**

Join the Mizpah Lodge #191 as they sponsor their Annual Taco Feed on Friday, April 26, 2013. All money raised will go towards the Fill the Backpack Campaign, which assists children in need of school supplies and backpacks in South Saint Paul. The Fill the Backpack Campaign is sponsored by the SSP Mayor Youth Task Force.
The Annual Taco Feed will be held at the Croatian Hall, located at 445 2nd Avenue South. Tacos will be served from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. Tacos are $2.00 each or 3 for $5.00.

For more information about the Fill the Backpack Campaign, the Annual Taco Feed or the South St. Paul Mayor’s Youth Task Force, contact Deb Griffith, Community Affairs Liaison at deb.griffith@southstpaul.org or (651) 554-3230.

Cottage Grove Cookbook Submissions

The Cottage Grove Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation is looking for recipes from community members. The recipes will be compiled into a community cookbook that will be sold at this year's Strawberry Fest.

Anyone who lives or works in Cottage Grove can contribute to the cookbook. You are welcome to submit any many recipes as you'd like. Please use a Word Document to format your entries. Entries can be submitted to: jburbank@cottagegrove.org. The deadline to submit is April 30.

South St. Paul Annual Dog and Cat Rabies Vaccination Clinic

The City of South Saint Paul will hold their annual Dog and Cat Rabies Vaccination Clinic on May 4th. The clinic will run from 12:30 – 2:00 p.m. All pets must be either on a leash or in a cage to attend the clinic.

The rabies vaccinations will be given at the South Metro Fire Department, located at 310 Marie Avenue in South Saint Paul. In order to receive the vaccination, you must have a voucher, which can be picked up from PCU Credit Union’s West Saint Paul branch, located at 1725 Robert Street. Vouchers will be given out while supplies last.

For additional information please call (651) 554-3200.