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## CAPITOL UPDATE FROM SENATOR TORREY WESTROM

Dear Friends,

*It was an honor to visit with a number of my constituents and represent my district at the Capitol. This week began with a meaningful celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The remainder of the week proved important and productive. The Senate convened to discuss disaster relief and federal tax conformity, two major issues. Also, I signed on to three bills: 1) SF0279 establishing educational diversion programs, 2) SF0222 modifying certification for small businesses own by veterans, and 3) SF0162 establishing flexible learning year programs for school districts. I look forward to keeping you up-to-date on these bills.*

Sincerely,  
Torrey

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## WEEK IN PICTURES



### National Federation of the Blind

On Wednesday, I welcomed members of the National Federation of the Blind to the Capitol. We discussed increasing resources for senior citizens, opportunities for blind Minnesotans, and accessible public transportation.



## MCCL Constituent Meet and Greet

On Thursday, I joined Representatives Paul Anderson and Jeff Backer, as well as 33 members of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL) for coffee and cookies after their March for Life at the Capitol. We had a meaningful conversation around abortion and right to life.



## March for Life at Capitol

Thousands of pro-lifers from across the state gathered on the Capitol steps to commemorate the anniversary of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision to legalize abortion. This is the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL) 41<sup>st</sup> annual March for Life.

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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### Disaster Assistance Deficiency Funding

On Thursday, legislators discussed disaster assistance deficiency funding legislation on the Senate floor. This bill provides funding to match federal disaster assistance covered by the Presidential Declaration of Disaster FEMA DR-4182 covering 37 counties and three tribal governments. Counties covered in the flood disaster declaration include Beltrami, Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Chippewa, Dodge, Faribault, Freeborn, Hennepin, Jackson, Koochiching, Lac Qui Parle, Lake of the Woods, Lyon, Le Sueur, Marshall, Martin, McLeod, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Ramsey, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Roseau, Scott, Sibley, Steele, Todd, Wadena, Waseca, Watonwan, Wright, and Yellow Medicine. Tribal units covered include Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Red Lake Band of Chippewa, and Prairie Island Indian



Community. In addition to providing the non-federal and state share for flood recovery from the heavy rains and significant storms last summer, the bill provides funding to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to repair damage to water and land infrastructure via erosion and sediment control projects. The bill also provides funding to the Department of Transportation to match Federal Highway Administration emergency relief funds to repair local roads damaged by the flooding.

### **Federal Tax Conformity and DMC State Aid Formula Clarification**

This bill as passed by the House reflects the federal tax conformity updates combined with the Destination Medical Center state aid formula fix. HF 6 passed the House 129-0 on 1/15/2015. The bill includes the following:

- 1) **Federal Tax Conformity:** This bill provides for tax conformity to update Minnesota’s tax code to federal changes made for tax year 2014. Overall, this bill provides for \$19.9 million in tax relief for tax year 2014 (FY 2015), and a net total of \$31.4 million in relief through the FY 2018-19 “tails”.
- 2) **Major provisions in this bill are the following:** Tax conformity provisions retroactively conforms Minnesota’s individual income tax and corporate franchise tax to most federal changes enacted since March 26, 2014. The federal changes to taxable income affect tax year 2014 only.

Most of the conformity relates to federal passage of the “Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014” (TIPA) □ Notable tax provisions that Minnesota would conform to for tax year 2014 include the following: o Educator classroom expense deduction of up to \$250.

- o Higher education tuition expense deduction. The deduction applies for up to \$4,000 of qualifying expenses for eligible taxpayers.
- o Excluding discharged debt on home short-sale.
- o Deduction for mortgage insurance premiums on a principal residence.
- o Authority for individuals age 70½ or older to transfer up to \$100,000 from a traditional IRA or Roth IRA directly to a qualified charity, while excluding that amount from adjusted gross income.
- o Enhanced deduction for charitable contributions of food inventory.
- o Parity in allowable deduction for employer-provided transit expenses with employer-provided parking expenses.
- o Deduction for energy efficient commercial building property placed in service in 2014. □ Conformity is also provided for the “Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014” (ABLE) which is effective beginning tax year 2015. ABLE savings plans would allow disabled individuals and their families tax free savings options (states are also required to enact authorizing legislation. The tax conformity provision in this bill supports only the prospective Minnesota tax treatment).

*Minnesota State Senator*



**TORREY WESTROM**

*Proudly serving the communities of Big Stone, Douglas*

*Grant, Pope, Stearns, Stevens, Traverse & Wilkins Counties*

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## Have you met Representative Jeff Backer?



Newly elected Jeff Backer represents House District 12A and the western part of Senate District 12. He recently took over former Representative Jay McNamar's seat. To stay informed on what is happening in the House of Representatives, subscribe to his email list here:

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/join.asp?id=15428>

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## Contact

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