

**GAVEL-TO-GAVEL COVERAGE OF THE 2004 MINNESOTA LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

**EDITOR'S CORNER**

The State Capitol in St. Paul was a hub of activity last week as various groups descended upon legislators to talk about their causes. Campaigners seeking more funding for early childhood and family development, more funding for programs at the University of Minnesota, as well as a group seeking greater awareness of the health issues for arthritis sufferers held programs and rallies in the Capitol Rotunda and met with state legislators. In committee hearings last week, legislators began the arduous and politically-charged task of reviewing the myriad bonding proposals before them. A number of legislative committees, including the K-12 Education, Health and Human Services and Transportation committees took up bonding testimony. In the House Transportation Committee, members heard about the merits of the proposed Northstar commuter rail project. Governor Tim Pawlenty recommended \$37.5 million for the project and it has growing support in the Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives.

**NAMES AND NUMBERS**

**Senate**

Senate Information ..... 651-296-0504  
Majority Leader Dean Johnson ..... 651-296-3826  
Minority Leader Dick Day ..... 651-296-9457

**House**

House Information ..... 651-296-2146  
Speaker Steve Sviggum ..... 651-296-2273  
Majority Leader Erik Paulsen ..... 651-296-7449  
Minority Leader Matt Entenza ..... 651-296-8799

**PUBLISHER: PETER COYLE**  
**EDITOR: JAMES MCGREEVY III**  
7900 XERXES AVENUE SOUTH  
SUITE 1500  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55431  
952-835-3800

FAX: 952-896-3333  
E-MAIL: [pcoyle@larkinhoffman.com](mailto:pcoyle@larkinhoffman.com)  
[www.larkinhoffman.com](http://www.larkinhoffman.com)

© Larkin Hoffman Daly & Lindgren Ltd. 2004

## Issues to Watch:

### Telecom Issues Explored in a House Committee:

The House Regulated Industries Committee reviewed the emerging issues in telecommunications in two days of hearings last week. The main issue for legislators and regulators is the speed with which the telecommunications industry is changing. Regulation cannot keep pace with the changing marketplace. One clear example of this dynamic is the emergence of Voice-over-Internet Protocol or Voice-over IP. Voice-over IP allows voice calls to be placed over the Internet rather than on traditional phone lines. It is currently being test marketed in many states, including Minnesota. State policymakers, like the members of the Regulated Industries Committee, will be dealing with the question of how, or whether, to regulate new telecom technologies, like Voice-over IP, for years to come.

### No Child Left Behind in the News:

The No Child Left Behind Act, the federal government's attempt to bring more accountability to the nation's K-12 education system, was the topic of some heated discussion at the State Capitol last week. Members of the Senate K-12 Education Committee adopted legislation to remove Minnesota from compliance with the Act's provisions. The bill, sponsored by Senator Michele Bachman (R-Stillwater) passed out of the committee on a voice vote. Shortly after the vote, U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige visited Minnesota to assess the law's success and rally support for it. Secretary Paige was joined by Governor Pawlenty and state Education Commissioner Cheri Pierson Yecke, two very strong supporters of President Bush's initiative. While liberal DFLers and conservative Republicans have some common ground in their opposition to the law, it is unlikely that the legislation passed in the Senate Education Committee will become law.

### Lottery Faces Scrutiny in the Legislature:

The Legislative Auditor released his report on the operation of the State Lottery last week before a meeting of the Legislative Audit Commission. In his 145-page report, Auditor James Nobles found the State Lottery spent much more of its sales revenue on operations than other state lotteries, was less accountable to state policymakers than other state lotteries and inappropriately awarded no-bid contracts to a St. Paul public relations firm. However, Nobles found no evidence of criminal wrongdoing on the part of George Andersen, the Lottery's long-time director, who took his own life last month. Nobles made 49 recommendations to improve the Lottery's operations. Governor Pawlenty has appointed Mike Vekich as interim director of the State Lottery.

**Need a copy of a bill? Call us at (952) 835-3800.**