



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®
MINNESOTA



CAPITOL
LETTER

MARCH 9, 2018

NEWS DASHBOARD

Students Watch the Legislature

Observers Vivian Latimer Tanniehill and Ellen Silva noted that classes of students observed some committee meetings. It's exciting to see students watch our legislative system in action!

Deadlines

Each year the Legislature establishes deadlines for committee action on bills.

- 1st deadline - March 22, 2018 at midnight. The first deadline is for committees to act favorably on bills in the house of origin.
- 2nd deadline - March 29, 2018 at midnight. The second deadline is for committees to act favorably on bills, or companions of bills, that met the first deadline in the other house.
- 3rd deadline - April 20, 2018 at midnight. The third deadline is for committees to act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills.
- Bills may still be acted upon after these deadlines when approved by each chamber's rules committees.
- The Minnesota Constitution requires that the legislature adjourn on May 21. They may not take official action on that last day, and thus the final deadline for legislative action is May 20.

Hot Issues

- **Child Care**

Peggy Decker - At first, there was no quorum for the February 28 meeting of the House Subcommittee on Childcare Access and Affordability, but an informational meeting was held until quorum arrived. Testifiers noted the number of decline of childcare providers statewide with "deserts" in both urban core and rural areas. Some testifiers advocated for deregulation and streamlining oversight for childcare providers. Several bills will be heard this session to attempt to address child care shortages.

- **Sexual Harassment**

After Tony Cornish and Dan Schoen both resigned after allegations of committing sexual harassment, both legislative chambers went through sexual harassment training. The House [created a Subcommittee](#) on Workplace Safety and Respect to begin addressing the policies used to address sexual harassment at the legislature. Rep. O'Neill (R-Maple Lake) and Rep. Lesch (DFL-St. Paul) have proposed a bipartisan [change to the House Rules](#). So far, conversations [have addressed](#) trying to balance privacy with public accountability, due process, and who can bring an allegation. A pair of companion bills, [SF 2491](#) and [HF 3034](#), would prevent taxpayer funds from paying for settlements of sexual harassment claims and

would require state agencies to report to the public payments made to fund awards and settlements in connection with allegations of sexual harassment.

- **Firearms**

Rep. Pinto (DFL-St. Paul) [exercised a little-used rule](#) to force the House of Representatives to hold hearings on two of his bills related to gun control. [HF 1169](#) would require background checks on most firearms. [HF 1605](#) would permit law enforcement or family members to prevent people who pose a significant danger to themselves or others from possessing firearms. After [contentious testimony](#) and debate, neither bill received further action. Meanwhile, the Department of Public Safety is [trying to ease safety fears](#) by supporting programs that aim to provide secure environments for schools. Governor Dayton unveiled his [Safe and Secure Schools Act](#) proposal, which would provide nearly \$16 million for safety improvements and intervention programs for students who exhibit worrisome behaviors.

Voting Rights & Election Laws

- **Legislative Auditor Report on Voter Registration**

During the week starting March 11, we expect a report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor on Minnesota's voter registration system. Keep an eye on news from LWV Minnesota.

- **Provisional Ballots, Money in Politics**

We are expecting some legislative interest to happen this session on both of these issues. Nick Harper, Civic Engagement Manager, is keeping a close eye on these topics with partners like the Clean Elections Minnesota and Common Cause Minnesota.

- **Fair District Maps, Restore the Vote, Automatic Voter Registration, National Popular Vote**

These are all LWV Minnesota priorities, but have not received any legislative attention since last year. Both are unlikely to pass in the current legislative session because they are low priorities for current legislative leadership. Nick Harper, Civic Engagement Manager, is keeping a close eye on these bills and their relevant committees.

Partner News: Minnesota Environmental Partnership

- **Solar and Wind that Power our Lives:** The renewable energy standard we set in 2007 will easily be achieved and Minnesota energy companies will get 25% or more of their energy from renewables by 2025. Some power companies are blowing past their benchmarks – because renewables bring real economic value. The wind power Xcel Energy is bringing online is cheaper than their lowest-cost coal plant. Our job is to set a new vision that goes further and fosters the electrification of all of our energy sectors, hastening our transition from fossil fuels to the fuels of the future.
- **High Efficiency Farming that Protects Our Water:** Incorporating perennials and new cash cover crops into existing cropping systems is highly effective at keeping nitrates, phosphorous and sediment from entering our rivers, lakes, and drinking water. Perennials can also increase profitable options for farmers, improve soil health, provide habitat for wildlife and pollinators, and sequester carbon. At the same time that dozens of Minnesota communities are struggling to mitigate elevated nitrate levels in their drinking water, farmers around the state

are showing that perennials can stack benefits for their operations and their communities. Now, we need to bring these practices to a scale that improves the air and water all the way from private wells in the countryside to our more than 10,000 lakes across the state.

- **MEP 2018 Legislative Priorities:** <https://www.mepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018-MEP-Community-Legislative-Priorities.pdf>

BILL TRACKING: VOTING RIGHTS & ELECTION LAW

SF2809

Metropolitan council governance modification and transportation advisory board elimination

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Jeorgette Knoll - On March 6, the Senate Committee on Local Government heard SF 2809, which modifies who sits on the Metropolitan Council. Changes the Metro Council from a governor-appointed body to a body of appointed elected officials. Testifiers Opposing: Patricia Nauman, Executive Director, Metro Cities; Gary Hansen, Eagan City Council Member; Judd Schetnan, Government Affairs Director, Metropolitan Council. Testifiers Supporting: Chris Gerlach, Dakota County Commissioner; Kevin Burkart, Prior Lake City Council Member; Colleen LaBeau, Lakeville City Council Member; Keith Carlson, Executive Director, Minnesota Inter-County Association. Several testifiers suggested that appointed elected officials could not represent regional issues. Passed and re-referred to the Committee on Transportation.
- **Last Action:** Comm report: To pass and re-referred to Transportation Finance and Policy
- **Action Date:** 3/8/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/962577>

HF3377

Natural resources commissioner required to provide voter registration information.

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Introduction and first reading, referred to Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance
- **Action Date:** 3/5/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/965678>

SF3021

Elections administration technical changes

- **Last Action:** Referred to State Government Finance and Policy and Elections
- **Action Date:** 3/5/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/966800>

HF1393

State primary date changed from August to June, and date of primary elections conducted by a political subdivision changed.

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Second Reading
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/832604>

HF1569

Electronic voting system provisions modified, and alternative printed ballot styles permitted.

- **Last Action:** Author added Poston.
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/835593>

HF3221

Elections administration technical changes made.

- **Last Action:** Introduction and first reading, referred to Government Operations and Elections Policy
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/963824>

HF3273

Metropolitan Council governance modified, and Transportation Advisory Board eliminated.

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Introduction and first reading, referred to Transportation and Regional Governance Policy
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/963880>

SF500

Absentee voting alternative procedure modification

- **Last Action:** Author added Bigham
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/805015>

HF2984

Landlords required to provide tenants with information on voter registration.

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Author added Lee.
- **Action Date:** 2/26/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/959895>

SF2694

Voter registration information provision by commissioner of natural resources (DNR) requirement

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Referred to State Government Finance and Policy and Elections
- **Action Date:** 2/26/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/960635>

SF2719

Landlord to provide voter registration information to tenants requirement

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Referred to Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy
- **Action Date:** 2/26/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/960557>

HF951

Civil right to vote restored to an individual upon release from incarceration or upon sentencing if no incarceration is imposed, notice required; county attorney obligation to promptly investigate voter registration and eligibility repealed.

- **Position:** Support
- **Last Action:** Author added Olson.
- **Action Date:** 2/20/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/819872>

BILL TRACKING: MONEY IN POLITICS

SF2960

Lobbyists appointment to multimember agencies prohibition

- **Last Action:** Referred to State Government Finance and Policy and Elections
- **Action Date:** 3/5/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/965039>

HF3268

Local officials required to file a statement of economic interest.

- **Last Action:** Introduction and first reading, referred to Government Operations and Elections Policy
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/964142>

SF2739

Statement of economic interest filing for all local officials requirement

- **Position:** Monitor
- **Last Action:** Author added Koran
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/960649>

HF2848

Lobbyists and former lobbyists prohibited from being appointed to multimember agencies.

- **Last Action:** Authors added Albright and Barr, R.
- **Action Date:** 2/26/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/958089>

SF358

Tax Returns Uniformly Made Public Act; presidential candidates five year tax return records disclosure requirement prior to ballot placement

- **Last Action:** Chief author added Rest
- **Action Date:** 2/22/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/797424>

HF2925

Exclusive representatives prohibited from requiring political contributions.

- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Nick Harper - Limits how unions may spend money in politics.
- **Last Action:** Introduction and first reading, referred to Government Operations and Elections Policy
- **Action Date:** 2/20/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/958268>

BILL TRACKING: OPIOIDS

HF1134

Prescription drug order filling time limited for opioid drugs.

- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Peggy Decker, Lynn Theurer - On February 22, the House Health and Human Services Reform Committee heard HF 1134 on regulating the prescription of opioid drugs. This bill is intended to help address the opioid abuse crisis in Minnesota. An oral amendment to update language for this session approved unanimously. After brief discussion clarifying section on refills, the bill was referred to the General Register unanimously.
- **Last Action:** Second Reading
- **Action Date:** 2/26/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/823954>

HF3062

Human services commissioner required to seek federal funding to implement an opioid awareness grant program for high school and college students, and report required.

- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Peggy Decker - Republican sponsored bill, with support for this bill from DFL Rep. Moran . Referred to Education Finance Committee.
- **Last Action:** Author added Moran.
- **Action Date:** 3/5/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/961144>

HF1440

Opiate stewardship program established, report required, and money appropriated.

- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Peggy Decker - On March 1, the House Health & Human Service Reform Committee heard HF 1440. A retired DEA official testified in support of the bill, noting opioid abuse has become an epidemic. Duluth Police also testified in support, noting St. Louis County is disproportionately affected with few resources. Other supporters also included James Cross from Natives Against Heroin and Dr. Heather Bell of Little Falls.
- **Last Action:** Author added Moran.
- **Action Date:** 3/5/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/832514>

BILL TRACKING: WATER QUALITY

HF2802

Regulatory certainty provided to municipalities that construct publicly owned treatment works to comply with new or modified effluent limitations.

- **Position:** Oppose
- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Gwen Meyers - On February 28, the House Environment & Natural Resources Committee heard HF 2802. The bill concerns regulations for municipalities that construct publicly owned treatment works to comply with new or modified sewage limitations. The statute would not require compliance for 16 years for certain facilities. The League of Minnesota Cities testified in favor. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency was neutral. The Minnesota Center on Environmental Advocacy opposed, noting that a similar provision was adopted last session but was found by an Administrative Law Judge to have violated the federal Clean Water Act. The bill was sent to the General Register.
- **Last Action:** Second Reading
- **Action Date:** 3/1/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/958083>

SF2807

Municipalities constructing publicly owned treatment works regulatory certainty for effluent limitations compliance

- **Position:** Oppose
- **Notes from LWV Minnesota:** Ellen Silva - On March 7, the Senate Environment Committee heard SF 2807, companion bill to House 2802. Craig Johnson, lobbyist for the League of Minnesota Cities appeared to co-present with Sen. Weber. Sen. Senjem supporting providing relief to small towns that can barely afford upgrades. Sens. Torres Ray, Eaton, and Dibble questioning whether the bill would allow cities to not obey federal Clean Water Act (Eaton), create a muddying of the law that would open the door to lawsuits (Torres Ray), or make it possible for an upstream municipality to allow hazardous pollutant to harm downstream municipality. Sen. Weber claimed the wording "to the extent allowed by federal law" avoided any concern about not obeying Clean Water Act, but Sens. Eaton and Torres Ray remained doubtful. Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy opposed, claiming that the blanket exemption provided in the 2017 rules was ruled to conflict with Clean Water Act.
- **Last Action:** Recommended to Pass; will be re-referred to another committee or placed on General Orders.
- **Action Date:** 3/7/2018
- **More Info:** <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/962708>

NEWS FROM OUR PARTNER

Dear League of Women Voters,

We need help collecting stories about how water quality affects your lives.

Water may be the biggest environmental issue of this legislative session. Clean drinking water shouldn't be a luxury. But across Minnesota, many communities and families need to be concerned about the safety and quality of the water that comes out of their ground, wells and tap.

As you know, nitrate pollution from agricultural runoff is a growing problem. Some communities have groundwater with nitrate levels so high that the water isn't safe to drink. Addressing these issues – by drilling deeper wells or building new treatment plants – can be difficult and costly.

- Hastings – building a new treatment plant cost approximately \$410 per household.
- St. Peter – building a new treatment plant cost approximately \$1,600 per household.
- Adrian – sealing wells and building a treatment plant cost approximately \$3,300 per household.

We have fact sheets with great information on the problem of [excessive nutrient pollution](#), [communities that are affected now and are heading that direction](#), and the [solutions](#). (Yes, there are really great solutions!)

But while data is important, it pales in significance to stories.

**We are collecting stories from people who live with polluted waters.
And we'd love to have your help.**

- Do you know someone who lives where they are not able to drink the water from their tap?
- Do you live in a community that is trying to lower the nitrates or other pollutants in their water so that it will be safe to drink?
- Does the water quality impact the way people live, children play, or businesses work?
- Are people able to use the lakes, streams and rivers like they used to?
- Does the water quality add extra expense, stress, work or worry for a family?

Any and every story is important.

We've heard from legislators and the Governor's office that they need stories to help make the case that impaired water quality is an important problem – one that is affecting real people in tangible ways.

It doesn't need to be fancy. Write the story on a scrap of paper, in an email, or -- let us know that you have a story and we will give you a call to hear it. Stories by **March 23** will help for upcoming hearings, but are important anytime.

Here's how to get in touch:

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