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Senator Hall's weekly update

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Fri, Mar 13, 2015 at 3:48 PM

A Message From Senator Dan D. Hall

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Greetings, neighbors.

It feels like we are finally making the long-awaited transition to spring. The days are growing longer at the legislature too. The following are some of the highlights from committees on which I serve:

State and Local Government

The State and Local Government committee heard [S.F. 1274](#) on Wednesday. The bill ratifies the labor agreement for the personal care givers negotiated between SEIU and the State. The contract includes pay increases and personal time off for personal care givers. Due to [Harris V. Quinn](#), personal care givers do not have to belong to the union and if they chose not to belong to the union they do not have to pay fair share dues. Our members expressed concern regarding the unknown dues amount and other terms of membership. S.F. 1274 will be heard next in Finance.

Elections

On Tuesday the Subcommittee on Elections passed [S.F. 455](#), the Elections Omnibus bill. The omnibus bill, a compellation of 13 bills, addresses various election administrative issues and some more controversial provisions. Early voting, which would allow voting fifteen days prior to the election, changes in redistricting for the incarcerated, and the restoration of felon's voting rights are among the more controversial aspects of the legislation.

The Elections committee also took up [S.F. 214](#). This controversial bill would alter the definition of "expressly advocating." This alteration would create confusion and would discourage participation in nonprofit issue advocacy. S.F. 214 also establishes a definition of "electioneering communications." The bill would also require associations to disclosure donors and members if the association participates in electioneering communication. This burden would further discourage political engagement. The bill's next stop is the Rules and Administration Committee.

Judiciary

This week, the committee passed a juvenile justice bill that specifically addresses the use of restraints in juvenile court cases, removal of life sentences without parole for juveniles who commit heinous crimes, and law enforcement's ability to use diversion programs for nonviolent juvenile offenders. [SF 994](#) now moves to the floor for a vote by the full Senate.

The Judiciary Committee also passed a small [bill](#) that would allow counties to use conciliation

court (frequently known as "small claims court") in cases where the counties are attempting to recover money from nonresidents (for example, residents of other counties in Minnesota) for services that have been provided to them or for fees that those people owe the counties. Examples include recovery of money in medical assistance fraud cases, child support, jail fees, and detoxification charges. Detox costs around \$750 to \$1000 per person that is rarely recovered if the person who owes it moves to a different county. Detox cost write-offs by counties cost taxpayers up to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. SF 440 will allow counties to attempt to recover taxpayer dollars from these individuals through efficient and effective ways.



Senator Dan Hall and Mike Howarth present **SF 375** at the Capitol



CHILD PROTECTION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Protecting at risk children

On Thursday, the Minnesota Senate unanimously passed [House File 8](#), which fast tracks two of the key recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children.

The bill contains two key provisions:

- * It repeals a law passed last year that prohibits the use of screened-out maltreatment reports by caseworkers.

- * It clarifies that the health and safety of children are the number one consideration when reports of neglect and maltreatment are received. This is a change from current law, which focuses on engaging the family's capabilities.

This important bill will allow caseworkers to form a more complete picture and consider all important information when making decisions. Our child protection laws should focus on the health and safety of the child above all else. My heart breaks for the innocent victims who were not protected by the system in the past, but these changes are a fantastic step toward preventing tragedies in the future.



MSHSL Transgender Policy

Reinforcing our children's safety and privacy at school

On Monday, Senate Republicans introduced the "Student Safety and Physical Privacy Act" to address serious concerns regarding a controversial new policy from the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL).

Last December, the MSHSL issued a new ruling allowing transgender students to play on a sports team other than the team of the student's biological sex. In effect, it allows male students who identify as female to play on girls sports teams.

The ruling was met with resistance from parents and families who were worried about what effect it would have on locker room and shower situations, and how the ruling would impact private and nonpublic schools. Before the final vote on the policy, the MSHSL was presented with a petition of 6,000 names opposing the changes, but the Board proceeded to adopt the plan anyway.

In addition to parent apprehension, the ruling also appears to be in conflict with state statutes.

The "Student Safety and Physical Privacy Act," which has been assigned [Senate File 1543](#), clarifies state law and sends a message to parents that we are listening to their concerns. It is a commonsense bill that protects students' basic safety and privacy rights by codifying what high schools are already doing. It simply defines who is eligible to participate on school sports teams and requires that schools maintain facilities like bathrooms and locker rooms that are separated based on biological sex. Schools will be able to continue to meet the needs of individual students who are uncomfortable using the facility that corresponds with their biological sex by offering access to a private facility.

I support this bill because it is clear Minnesota families are unhappy with the Board's decision. A recent statewide poll from Public Opinion Strategies showed only 29 percent of respondents supported the MSHSL ruling, while 76 percent support the changes in our bill. As a father and grandfather, I share your concerns about the policy. The "Student Safety and Physical Privacy Act" addresses the needs of transgender students while continuing to protect every student's safety and privacy.



As always, if you have any questions or legislative issues, please don't hesitate to contact me.



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