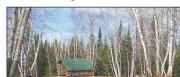


## Sunday April 28, 2019

# Pioneer The Bemidji Pioneer





High 48° Low **34°** Weather, Page A2



Photos by Jordan Shearer / Bemidji Pioneer

Jeanne Thunder and Kevin Jones Jr. speak with Lianne Lussier and Betty Hanson, first and second from right, on April 18 about a

## A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

Advocates hope to legalize marijuana in Red Lake Nation

By Jordan Shearer jshearer@bemidjipioneer.com

evin Jones Jr. and Jeanne Thunder have a message for the tribal members behind every door they

petition to legalize marijuana in Red Lake Nation.

in Red Lake Nation. Armed with clipboards and dressed in T-shirts that read "Red Lake Nation

for Legalization," the two advocates have been driving from house to house, speaking to residents about a petition that would allow people to use the drug within the reservation's boundaries.

knock on: it's time to legalize marijuana

Regardless of what may happen to marijuana legalization throughout Minnesota, there's a handful of residents in Red Lake's sovereign community who are trying to take matters into their own hands. That's because, for a large number of band members like Jones and Thunder, there's no shortage of reasons to legalize marijuana.

From declogging the judicial system to bringing more revenue into the community to helping those with medical needs, they're convinced the

**GRASS:** Page A6



Marcus Harcus, executive director of the Minnesota Campaign For Full Legalization, speaks on April 13 at a forum at the Red Lake Community Center about the possibility of legalizing marijuana in Red Lake Nation.

# Sanford, Hospice Foundation partner on upcoming program

By Matthew Liedke

mliedke@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — The Hospice Foundation of America and Sanford Health are partnering this week to open a dialogue about supporting those dealing with loss.

On Tuesday, April 30, Sanford Bemidji Medical Center will be one of many host sites broadcasting an HFA program titled "Aging America: Coping since I've been with Hospice, important thing for people to with Loss, Dying and Death and that's 23 years," said Tracy learn more about the how-to-

If you go

What: "Aging America: Coping with Loss, Dying and Death Later in Life."

When: 1 to 3:45 p.m. Tuesday, April 30

Where: Sanford Bemidji Medical Center, 1300 Anne St.

Later in Life." This is the 26th Johanns, a licensed social annual program by the HFA worker for Hospice through and its been shown in Bemidji Sanford Health. "We've been nearly just as long.

having this for a long time "We've been doing this ever in the community. It's an

help in the grief process."

According to the HFA, this education for care providers is becoming more important, as an estimated 10,000 people in the United States turn 65 daily. The program has been designed to help mental health professionals, health care providers and the community as a whole better support aging Americans.

**PARTNER:** Page A5

HOW BUYING YOUR FIRST HOME SHOULD BE.

## Minn. lawmakers agree to pursue conformity with federal tax rules

GOP, DFL disagree on how to get there

**By Christopher Magan** St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL — If Minnesota lawmakers can overcome their differences, it should be easier to file your state taxes

You might even get a tax cut. Or pay

With a month left to go in their legislative session, tax policy is front and center again at the Capitol. The Legislature has more work to do on the topic than usual this year because they

were unable to agree on a bill in 2018.

The biggest thing they want to do is take advantage of changes in the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

That requires either "conforming" to federal tax policy or coming up with Minnesota-specific tax provisions. Minnesota-specific tax provisions.

Republicans and Democrats agree that passing a conformity bill is important. Without one, state taxes will remain dramatically different from the federal code.

The agreement pretty much ends

Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party members see federal tax conformity as a chance to raise new revenues to fund priorities like education, health care and what they like to call "community prosperity." They've proposed more than \$1 billion in new revenues largely from raising taxes on businesses and

**DFLers** taxes and fees on car sales and registrations to pay for transportation needs. And they don't want to let a 2% tax on health care providers sunset in 2020 as planned.

the wealthy.

Describing House Democrats' plan, tax committee chair Rep. Paul Marquart, of Dilworth, said: "It finds those resources and sets the foundation for a DFL budget that invests in people and invests in making this state better."

Republicans don't like any of Democrats' big ideas. They say higher taxes won't make Minnesota better.

Instead, they've offered a tax bill that raises some new revenue, but the new money goes toward tax cuts for the middle class and businesses. They've characterized their plan as "protecting the taxpayer," arguing that letting residents keep more of their money is best for the economy.

"The best thing we can do for Minnesota, the best social program for Minnesota is a job and opportunity," said Sen. Roger Chamberlain, R-Lino Lakes, who leads the Senate tax committee.

Why tax conformity?

The federal tax changes passed by the Republican-controlled Congress and signed by President Donald Trump in 2017 dramatically remade the country's tax code. Rates for individuals and corporations were lowered, but in exchange, a lot of popular credits and deductions were curtailed or eliminated.

**TAX RULES:** Page A6



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# Marathon floor sessions make way for the session's biggest debates

**By Dana Ferguson** Forum News Service

ST. PAUL — Minnesota lawmakers spent days debating large funding proposals this week, with the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives and GOP-led Senate passing very different plans for how the state should spend almost \$50 billion over the next two years.

A new report provided fodder for lawmakers fighting against tax hikes proposed by the governor's office.

And after months of to stand divided on some a GOP senator said she man, would dig in to get the deal she wanted.

from their Easter/Passof a May 1 deadline to get them ready for negotinights, arguing over dozens of amendments and spending bills.

in the next three weeks for legislative leaders and Gov. Tim Walz to enter negotiations over what will make it and what their impacts) will be cut from the state budget.

Leaders in the nation's only divided Legislature sit on either side of a \$2 billion split over how much the state should spend. And they disagree on key issues like whether to raise taxes to fund a boost to education or repairs to roads and bridges or to keep them

As the clock ticks down, here's a look at what happened this week at the Capitol.

#### Floor sessions stretch on as deadline looms

bills set to be considered as part of the state bud-In a series of hours-long analysis showed. hearings, each chamber deadline.

accused of sexual

misconduct quits

Minn. - A middle school

basketball coach who

came under fire for sexu-

al misconduct allegations

in December, resigned

from all duties with the

Pelican Rapids School

District Monday, April 15.

The district was in

the midst of a reopened

touched a player's butt

no evidence and closing

during practice.

RAPIDS,

district job

PELICAN



CAPITOL NOTEBOOK

And that's where the real work will start as leaders have to strike compromises over what fight stretches on will make it into the twoyear spending plan.

to use federal funding to those proposals, House boost election security, Speaker Melissa Hort-DFL-Brooklyn Park, and Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, Lawmakers returned R-Nisswa, said they were still working well togethover break this week to er and expected to get marathon floor sessions a budget done in time, to pass budget bills. Ahead avoiding a special session or government shutdown.

"Don't look for kumations, members of the baya every minute of House and Senate spent every day here," Hortlong hours, including late man said. "There is supposed to be conflict; there is supposed to be strong casting votes on a set of disagreement, but I think just because you see that The approval of the in the floor debate in both budget bills sets the table the House and the Senate does not bode ill for our future negotiations."

#### Tax plans (and come into view

A state analysis this week showed that a Walz administration tax plan other groups.

The Minnesota Departthat showed Walz's tax state to take \$1.5 million. plan, which includes a 20-cent-per-gallon gas- this week skipped a conoline tax hike, retention ference committee meetof a two-percent medical ing to iron out the difprovider tax and adjustments to state income tax proposals. And Kiffmeyrates would have an outsized impact on some of the state's lowest wage earners.

Minnesotans that make One-by-one, the House \$14,528 or less would see and Senate debated and an 8.57 percent increase voted on large spending in their tax burden, while those making more than \$185,601 would see a get in the coming weeks. 4.39 percent increase, the

Walz's office said the approved the proposals tax increases would help which are set to move fund E-12 and highto conference committees er education, repairs to next week after the May 1 roads and bridges and health and human ser-

Republicans said the governor's tax plan was wrong approach introduced their own plan, which would include no tax hikes and would have no impact on the state general fund. The proposal could also reduce income tax rates for some middle-class earners.

#### **Election security**

Minnesota senator said she'd contin-While they continued ue to hold up an effort to release \$6.6 million attempted negotiations of the biggest issues in in federal funding to enhance state election security efforts, citing concerns about where the money would go.

Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer, R-Big Lake, chairs the State Government Finance and Policy and **Elections Committee and** is a former Minnesota secretary of state. She said this week that she's not seen enough detail about how the Secretary of State's office would use federal Help America Vote Act funds and felt that office had taken an "allor-nothing approach."

"I found that in the information we had to date, there was a lot lacking," Kiffmeyer told reporters on Thursday. "We had more ques-

Minnesota is the only state that has not gained access to federal funding, which is earmarked for election cybersecuriwould hit low-income ty. The Minnesota House Minnesotans harder than gave the green light for the state to accept the whole \$6.6 million figure ment of Revenue on and the Minnesota Sen-Tuesday issued a report ate approved allowing the

Republican senators ferences between the two er this week presented a state government spending bill that put almost \$20.5 million toward cybersecurity at various levels but didn't touch on the federal dollars.

Gazelka said he wanted to make sure the plan gets vetted properly and the issue would get ironed out before the end of the legislative session.

"It will get done," Gazelka said.

Follow Dana Ferguson on Twitter @ bydanaferguson, call 651-290-0707 or email dferguson@forumcomm. com

**NEWS BRIEF** 

### Minn. governor modifies job posting period in response to IRRR cronyism

By Brady Slater Forum News Service

DULUTH — Gov. Tim Walz sent a written reprimand to the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation late this week saying the fast-tracked hiring of politician Joe Radinovich



meet my expectations." " M y office never direct-

ed you to

"failed to

request a shortened posting period or otherwise vary from ordinary hiring procedures,"



**Phillips** 

Walz said in the letter to IRRR Commissioner Mark Phillips. Walz's office shared

the letter following a Forum News Service data request.

Radinovich resigned Thursday, April 25, from a supervisory role that was scheduled to pay him \$100,000 annually with full benefits.

An investigative report into crony hiring at the agency by the Timberjay newspaper last week detailed the truncated process and how Radinovich's name had been included on a handwritten update of the IRRR organizational chart even prior to the job opening being posted.

Walz's reprimand was not the only fallout of the saga. Republican lawmakers remained unsatisfied by the governor's response on Friday.

"I'm pleased to see that this was not swept under the rug and that the governor is paying attention," Rep. Sandy Layman, R-Cohasset, said. "I still have questions letter of reprimand.

about how, if it wasn't the governor's intent, the governor's name was used to expedite the pro-

On Friday, well-regarded Iron Range political commentator Aaron Brown called for Phillips to resign on the website Minnesota Brown.

"I can't imagine Phillips being an effective, credible leader of the agency after this incident. He should resign," Brown wrote Friday.

In a statement, Sen. Tom Bakk, DFL-Cook, downplayed the need for the commissioner to bow

"Commissioner Phillips made a mistake with (the) expedited hiring," Bakk said. "I fully support his continued service as the agency commissioner."

A one-time Democratic-Farmer-Labor state lawmaker, Radinovich lost to Rep. Pete Stauber, R-Hermantown, for the 8th Congressional District seat last November. Radinovich was hired at the Eveleth-based IRRR in March. Phillips had telegraphed the hiring throughout the process, telling the Timberjay, "I was openly talking about bringing him back on."

Phillips did not respond to a Forum News Service request for comment Friday. Instead, the IRRR issued the following statement: "Commissioner Phillips is committed to exceeding the Governor's expectations in his duties and responsibilities as commissioner of the (IRRR)."

In February, the IRRR had requested a single-day posting period to fast-track the hiring process, and in doing so cited an urgent need to meet expectations from the governor's office as a reason to expedite the hiring. Walz took umbrage with this in his

"It was inappropriate to use my office as your stated rationale for requesting an exception from the (Management and Budget office)," Walz wrote.

Walz added it was also "inappropriate" for IRRR to vary from what had been a seven-day posting requirement to hire Radinovich. According to the Timberjay, a female applicant with IRRR experience was interviewed, but passed over for the job in favor of Radinovich.

Walz noted throughout his letter that his administration will adopt a new 21-day posting policy for hiring classified state positions. The move is "designed to ensure inclusiveness, openness and transparency in the hiring process for classified positions," he wrote.

The Department of Management and Budget "is amending its Job Announcement Policy to require a 21-day post-ing period for all classified managerial positions like this one," Walz wrote to Phillips. "You may not vary from this policy unless you receive explicit approval directly from Commissioner (Myron) Frans."

Layman told the News Tribune that she will offer an amendment to budget legislation as soon as next week that would, if approved by lawmakers, codify with the new Walz administration policy and make law out of the 21-day posting period for classified managerial posi-

The IRRR is a state agency created in 1941. It features roughly 60 employees and is designed to foster economic diversity and resiliency on the Iron Range and throughout Northeastern Minnesota.

#### \$100,000 settlement ends Dakota County Technical College whistleblower lawsuit

**By Josh Verges** 

St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL — Dakota County Technical College in Rosemount, Minn., and Minnesota State have agreed to pay \$100,000 to resolve a lawsuit alleging whistleblower retalia-

Cameron Stoltz, DCTC's former mens soccer coach and athletic coordinator, sued the school following his dismissal in 2016.

He claimed school leaders removed him because he raised concerns three years earlier about misspent federal funds, academic fraud and gender inequity in sports.

A 2013 investigation by Minnesota State, which oversees DCTC and 36 other public colleges and universities, validated some of Stoltz's complaints.

investigation That found possible student-athlete eligibility violations and numerous financial irregularities concerning the school's sports teams under then-President Ron Thomas.

brought sports to the for declining to renew two-year school, retired before the investigation was completed.

His successor, Tim fessional and belliger-Wynes, split his time as president of both DCTC Community College until taking a job in Illinois last year. Soon after Wynes took

over at DCTC, Stoltz had his work hours cut by 25 percent without explanation. The faculty union later helped Stoltz win that time back.

In a preliminary ruling in December, Ramsey County District Judge Robyn Millenacker said Stoltz could continue making a case that DCTC's attempt to reduce his work hours amounted to retaliation for his complaints against the school.

In the same ruling, however, Millenacker rejected the notion that DCTC, under new management, dismissed Stoltz in 2016 for what he'd done in 2013.

"The interval of time ... is too vast and Plaintiff points to no other evidence establishing a reasonable inference of causation," the judge wrote.

Further, Millenacker wrote that DCTC Thomas, who first had legitimate grounds Stoltz's contract in 2016. Stoltz had become

"progressively unpro-

ent" with his supervisor, the judge wrote, and he and nearby Inver Hills failed to report that an assistant soccer coach had been cited by police for smoking marijuana on a road trip.

The school only learned about the drug use when Stoltz asked the school to reimburse a \$200 hotel cleaning bill related to smoking in the room.

"Defendants presented legitimate, non-retaliatory reasons for not renewing Plaintiff's temporary-part time employment contracts,' the judge wrote.

According to the settlement agreement, DCTC and Minnesota State agreed to the \$100,000 payment in order to avoid additional litigation costs. They admitted no wrongdoing.

Stoltz will get just less than half of the settlement funds, with the remainder going to his lawyer, Dan Olson, with Bassford Remele.

Stoltz, who directs league operations for the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association, could not be reached for comment Thursday.

A 2015 federal Title IX investigation into gender equity in DCTC sports remains active.

#### **PARTNER**

my profession who are facing depression, loneliness and isolation,"

couple weeks later, at the ond investigation. urging of Assistant Otter Thomason. Gravalin was the sub-11 years ago when he was himself as the victim.

the head girls basketball He was accused of mentally abusing and sexu- his family," she said, investigation into the ally harassing basketball adding that her daughter allegation that Shawn players. He resigned from has gone through tur-Gravalin inappropriately the position in July 2008. moil and stress of her

Pelican Rapids coach a month-long investiga- remained a paraprofestion Jan. 17, the district sional at the school. He reopened the sexual mis- was on paid administraconduct investigation a tive leave during the sec-

The mother of the Tail County Attorney Jake middle school student who filed the complaint against Gravalin says she ject of similar allegations is tired of him casting

"He's the one who coach in Hankinson, N.D. brought suffering to my daughter, our family and Gravalin resigned from own, going through traucoaching basketball and ma counseling, enduring After initially finding softball in Pelican Rap- nightmares, and having ids in January, but he trouble trusting adults.

> the main entrance on the east side of the hospital.

Todd Cortese, director interested can contact p.m. on the first and third So we need to work to 3:45 p.m. in the Educa- of Hospice Home Care in the program's organizer Thursday of each month. help them get support. tional Conference Center Bemidji, said the event Andrea Lewis at andrea. The meetings take place With these, we can learn at Sanford Bemidji Medi- will start with the video lewis@sanfordhealth.org at Sanford Health Neilfrom each other, and find cal Center, 1300 Anne St. presentation, followed by

Johanns said. "In some community to help those encouraged to enter at on the topics featured.

or call (218) 333-5702.

Cortese noted a grief NW.

support group has been For more information established locally, with about attending, those meetings from 4:30 to 6 son Place, 1000 Anne St.

#### From Page A1

"I see a lot of elders in grieving a loss and are

cases, it's just by nature who are grieving." of not getting out, as many are homebound. will take place from 1 to

Tuesday's presentation

resources throughout the NW. Those attending are a 30-minute discussion