

Opinions

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The 24-week paid leave program would be funded by new \$1 billion payroll tax

Today, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), which represents over 10,000 small businesses in Minnesota, is raising alarm over a proposal to establish a state-run, 24-week paid leave program funded by a \$1 billion payroll tax increase.

The proposal requires small employers and others to fund the state paid leave program, allows employees to take up to 24 weeks of leave per year, and would create a new bureaucracy to manage the program. Initial development and staffing costs for the program will exceed \$85 million, according to a 2019 state fiscal analysis.

"This unnecessary mandate will only exacerbate staffing and financial headaches for small businesses in Minnesota," said NFIB State Director John Reynolds. "After struggling through the pandemic, the last thing Main Street needs is a \$1 billion payroll tax hike. Our small employers care about their employees and are mindful of what they need. They don't need politicians in St. Paul micromanaging their business."

Small employers are already facing painful economic headwinds - record inflation, skyrocketing energy costs, labor shortages, supply chain disruptions - and many have not fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the most recent NFIB Small Business Recovery Survey:

- 67% are experiencing staffing shortages
- 77% have lost sales due

to staffing shortages

• 27% say staffing shortages are worse than 3 months ago (only 6% say better)

In response, small employers are doing everything they can to keep up: 95% have increased starting wages, 91% are working more hours, 62% are offering more overtime, and more than a quarter are increasing paid time off and health insurance benefits.

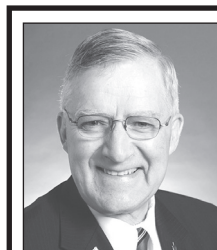
According to the Employee Benefits Research Institute (EBRI), in 2020, 77% of employees were offered paid vacation and 66% were offered paid sick time.

"Small business owners need flexibility to do the best they can for their business and their employees," added Reynolds. "It's particularly insulting to poli-

ticians propose a \$1 billion tax hike after failing to stop massive Unemployment Insurance tax increases caused by the pandemic and government shut-downs."

While the Paid Leave Payroll Tax starts at .6% of wages up to \$147,000 per year, it could increase to any amount necessary to cover claims in future years. Due to higher than expected utilization, Washington State's paid leave program increased its payroll tax by 50% for 2022.

"The massive surge in unemployment claims during the pandemic showed us how quickly these types of programs can become overwhelmed," said Reynolds. "Based on low assumptions about the average worker using the program, it seems almost certain costs will exceed expectations and the payroll tax will go up in future years."



NEWS FROM THE CAPITOL

Sen. Bruce Anderson

Friends and neighbors,

This week at the Capitol, a bill I authored this session was heard in the Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy Committee. S.F. 3987 would help Minnesotans with disabilities continue to have access to quality job placement services and on the job support services through the Extended Employment (EE) program.

The EE is a great program that provides people with

disabilities the opportunity to feel connected to their community through gainful work. I know firsthand how beneficial this program is as I have a daughter who is employed through a sheltered workshop.

Due to drastic increase in marketplace hourly wages, EE providers are struggling to maintain adequate staff levels. For this reason, my bill would increase EE funding by \$2.285 million for fiscal year 2023 and beyond for a total of \$33.8 million for fiscal years 2024 through 2025. This additional support would be very beneficial to many organizations across Minnesota, including Functional Industries in our own community.

Located in Buffalo, Functional Industries has been providing vocational services to people with barriers to employment for more than four decades. And in this week's Jobs Committee, Lisa Parthe, vice president of community engagement, shared how important EE services are to the people they serve. And especially coming out of the pandemic, Functional Industries has found more people are receiving jobs in their communities, and therefore, in need of additional support to maintain their employment.

Another organization that would benefit from this bill is the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute (CKRI), which serves people with disabilities and those recovering from serious injuries such as a brain injury, stroke. CKRI has 57 locations throughout Minnesota, including a local branch in Buffalo.

CKRI shared their support of this funding increase and the important role it would play in fur-



Minnesota Senate District 30

Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer

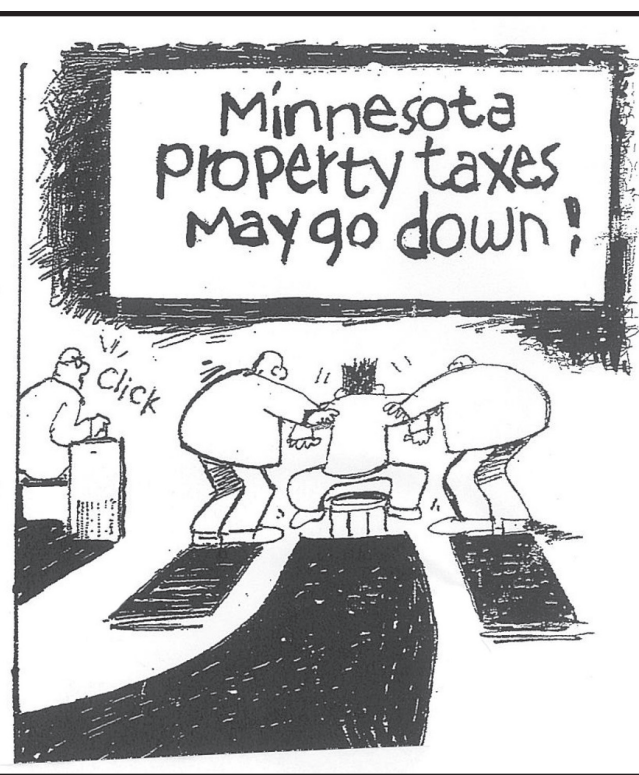
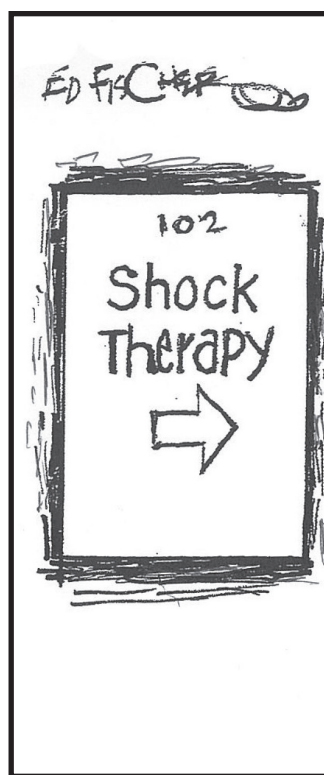
Nuclear Power: Affordable, Clean, and Renewable Energy for Minnesota

Friends and neighbors,

We live with nuclear power in our back yard and know the benefits and that it has many advantages but few drawbacks. Nuclear is a zero-emission, carbon-free clean energy source. In fact, in just 2019, nuclear energy allowed the United States to avoid more than 476 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Nuclear energy creates an enormous amount of energy using a very small amount of fuel. This results in a small land footprint, which produces more electricity on less land than any other source such as wind or solar.

Safety is a concern brought up in discussion on nuclear power. However, the facts and statistics show it is actually the safest form



Vojtech Voice

By Emily Vojtech



Outstanding women in Minnesota-end of Women's History Month

As March comes to an end, so does Women's History Month. To close out the month, I wanted to take the time to recognize some outstanding women in Minnesota. These are just some of the many inspiring women from Minnesota from the past and present. Hopefully these women will continue to inspire the future women of Minnesota. The women listed below are in no particular order.

Judy Garland- One of the most recognizable names from Minnesota. Judy Garland was famous for her role as Dorothy Gale in M.G.M.'s film "Wizard of Oz" (1939). Garland was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Her childhood home still stands in Grand Rapids as the Judy Garland Museum paying tribute to her and her life.

Judy Garland lived from 1922 to 1969 and performed pretty much her entire life. Along with her acting career, Garland was a very talented singer with a beautiful voice. One of my favorite Christmas songs is her version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas."

What is most inspiring to me about Judy Garland, is that although she faced a lot of adversity and poor treatment throughout her career, she still worked extremely hard and became one of the most iconic performers of all time. Watching her sing, you would never guess what was going on behind the scenes. She showed a lot of strength throughout her entire life.

Lindsey Vonn- Burns-ville native, and skiing champion, Lindsey Vonn has been an amazing athlete to watch throughout her career. She is one of two women to earn four World Cup Championships (2008, 2009, 2010, 2012). She was named the US Olympic Committee's Sportswoman of the Year in 2010.

According to USA Today, she established the Lindsey Vonn Foundation to provide scholarships, fund camps, and provide inspiration to girls and young women.

The most inspiring thing to me about Lindsey Vonn is her amazingly long and successful skiing career. She made her Olympic debut at 17-years-old and just recently retired in 2019. She was a fierce competi-

tor and seemed to always show great sportsmanship.

Growing up, I was always looking for female athletes to look up to, and Lindsey Vonn was one of my top ones. She is one of the most influential women in athletics.

Lindsey Whalen- Another outstanding athlete from Minnesota that has kept most of her basketball career local. Whalen was a basketball star, and now Head Coach of the Minnesota Gopher's Women's Basketball Team, where she played in college. In high school, Whalen played at Hutchinson High School (Hutchinson, MN).

Whalen was a first round WNBA draft pick in 2004 and ended up playing eight years of her professional career with the Minnesota Lynx.

While at the University of Minnesota, attendance at women's basketball games grew during Whalen's career. According to her college statistics, she became The University of Minnesota's all-time leading scorer in 2004. She finished her collegiate career with 2,285 points. Her jersey number, 13, was retired at the University of Minnesota in 2005.

Throughout her career she earned many championships and set records in women's basketball.

What is most inspiring to me about Lindsey Whalen is her commitment to the sport and her home state. When she first obtained the head coaching job at the University of Minnesota, she was also still playing in the WNBA, juggling two huge commitments. She has been a huge inspiration to me as an athlete and a coach.

Gigi Marvin- One of the many Gopher women's hockey players that I looked up to growing up has been one of the best to play the game. Marvin grew up playing in Warroad, and received the Let's Play Hockey Ms. Hockey award during her high school career in 2005.

Marvin went on to play for the University of Minnesota Women's Hockey team. She is the sixth all-time scoring list with 87 goals, and had 108 assists in her career, leading her total points to be 195 points in her college career.

Vojtech Voice

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State Rep. Marion O'Neill

Legislative Update

We are in the midst of legislative committee deadlines, with the second deadline coming up this Friday. First deadline was March 25th, and our final committee deadline is April 8th. As a reminder, here is what each deadline requires:

• "The first deadline is for committees to act favorably on bills in the house of origin." The bills need to pass all of their policy committees in either the House or the Senate or it will not move forward.

• "The second deadline is for committees to act favorably on bills, or companions of bills, that met the first deadline in the other house." The bill must pass all of its policy committees in the other body or it will not move forward.

• "The third deadline is for committees to act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills." It needs to be passed out of the finance committee of its issue jurisdiction.

• Just as a reminder, I serve as the Republican Lead member on Higher Education Finance and Policy, Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy, and the main fiscal committee, Ways and Means, which has to pass all of the major appropriation and finance bills before they get to the House Floor. Finally I serve on the Subcommittee on Legislative Process Reform which spent two and a half months trying to reform Chapter 12, the Governor's emergency powers.

• We do not have budget targets for a supplemental budget, which we need in order to pass supplemental budget bills. We currently have a \$9.3 billion surplus, with a fully funded \$3 billion reserve, or "rainy day fund". If we are going to have robust debates on spending bills, it is past time to have public budget targets to avoid another situation where a three person "tribunal" decides the entire supplemental budget.

New Area Dental Clinic

There is a new dental clinic opening in our area this summer! According to Community Dental Care,

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