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Legislative session heats up as sticking points between parties bubble to surface

Local lawmakers drill down on funds for public safety, tax reform

Hannah Davis

With Minnesota's legislative session underway, local lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree that discussions about the any action. That means lostate's projected budget surplus, public safety and infrastructure will take up much of their time. Getting them to agree on how to address those issues will prove more difficult.

began Monday, Jan. 31, and even though it's not a budget-setting year, the \$9.25 billion surplus has sparked a lot of discussion process. about spending.

The early points for local legislators was using state taxpayer dollars to pay the federal Dettmer (Dist. 39A) said. government back for unemployment insurance. There was an early bipar-

tisan effort to use some of the surplus to repay the unemployment insurance trust debt — about \$1.3 billion the state borrowed from the federal government to keep the unemployment insurance program afloat during the pandemic.

But that fell through when the mid-March deadline passed without cal businesses will see an increase in the their taxes to help replenish the unemployment insurance trust fund, though there is a possibility that if legislators come to an agree-The legislative session ment before the end of the session, businesses could be reimbursed for those payments, but that would be a lengthy complicated

They're going to be sticking put in a real not good place in terms of keeping a business going," Rep. Bob

Rep. Anne Neu Brindley

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Brothers of Mike and Ken Anderson pause to take in the sight of Mt. McKinley during their trip.

Camaraderie and community found on Iditarod

Forest Lake brothers complete trip along Alaskan trail via snowmobile

Natalie Ryder Community Editor

Not many siblings plan to ride the Iditarod trail via snowmobile as the seasons shift from winter to spring for a vacation, but Forest Lake natives Doug, Ken and Mike Anderson knew it would suit has retired his mushing days and

We were talking about this off his brothers. and on for the last couple years, and then kind of like a year ago, we decided to do this," Doug Anderson said.

The three spent about a year getting supplies together and the trail and some mushers comshipping them to Alaska, but the brothers didn't need to spend much time getting familiar with the expansive trail in the last fronthe trail, as Ken raced the Iditarod tier. 17 times between 1999-2017. He placed in the top 10 six times, but

turned to a snowmobile trip with

"He's never done it by snowmobile, and he wanted us to be able to go with and see the trail," Doug

Ken knows many people along peting, which allowed the three to feel that sense of community along

But Ken's mushing experience,

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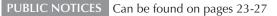


SPORTS



Twice as nice LILA archers repeat state championship Page 14







Iditarod

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while helpful, didn't necexperience.

The Andersons weren't on a tight schedule like the took their time completing the trail, which they did in about eight days starting in early March ending in mid March. The first-place musher of 2022 bile that doesn't have studs finished the race in about on the track, you know, eight days and 14 hours on Tuesday, March 15.

The three rode on their own snowmobiles, with one of the machines pulling an almost 1,000-pound sled with barrels of fuel, a biles up the hill was tricky tent and essentials to get enough, even without the three of them to each towing the 1,000-pound of the towns along the sled of gear. When they trail. The weight of the tried pulling the full sled tent, which held a collapsible oven to warm it, was biles, they decided half of heavy, so they primarily the sled's contents would planned to stay in cabins

along the trail. They stayed in an occasional bed and breakfast, and, one night, the garage of a mechanic.

We were trying to essarily make for an easy avoid using the tent as much as possible," Doug

On one of the first mushers, so the brothers nights of the journey, they had to pitch the tent around 3 a.m. alongside the trail after struggling up an icy hill.

"One heavier snowmotried getting up there. Got to the top and then slid all the way back down in reverse to the bottom," Doug said.

Getting the snowmowith each of the snowmo-



From left, Mike, Doug and Ken Anderson completed the Iditarod trail on snowmobiles in eight days this March. Ken previously competed as a dog musher in the Iditarod 17 times, with his last race in 2017.

carried up the hill. Then Doug hopped back onto the studded snowmobile, drove a mile back to get the momentum to pull the half-full sled up the hill.

"As I got to the top, my brother was standing right there, and I'm totally spinning out. And they get behind it, and they're push-

need to be unpacked and ing it and we just barely, barely ease up that hill," Doug recalled.

> sled and got back on their way, it was nearly midnight. By the time they slept in a four-person cabreached their destination, in together. they had rode nearly 80 miles. And when they fi- snowmobilers, hikers, biknally reached the safety ers and the mushers comcabin, which included just peting in the race, there two bunk beds to sleep was collective camaradeon, they were dismayed rie along the trail to ensure beat them there.

group, to the next town.

we pull into McGrath, there's a little bar there and joked.

Camaraderie

The decision to beat the group of six snowmobilers to the cabins was the closest the Andersons got to racing on this vacation. But the competitive spirit in those early days to fight for the safety cabins later faded into camaraderie when the Bearcat group showed up to a cabin the Andersons and a hiker were already at.

"Of course we [said], 'Come on in,' and we had After they refilled the a nice night. They shared their boxed wine with us," Doug said. The 10 of them

Among the locals, to find someone else had everyone made it safely from place to place. Safety After the rough night and knowledge about the in the tent, the three de- trail and machines the cided they'd try to beat the Andersons rode on were group of six snowmobil- crucial to finishing the ers, which they'd later find trail. They were no strangout was called the Bearcat ers to snowmobiles before this trip, as they grew up "Immediately, [when] riding them in northern

Minnesota.

"You could not do this the first thing I do is get a trip unless you have the beer and bring each of my ability to ride decently brothers a beer," Doug and/or repair stuff on the fly with whatever you might have on hand," Doug said.

> In the 1,000-pound sled, they had replacement parts to fix some typical issues that may occur with snowmobiles. But when one of the machine's oil lines blew out, they were stuck without the correctsized tube to repair it.

"It was a nice day, but it was windy. And we're repairing, and we didn't really have the right diameter hose," Doug said.

They didn't have the replacement part until a group of Norwegian snowmobilers, who were on the trail supporting the rookie Norwegian musher Hanna Lyrek, stopped to help them.

Then we became friends with them, saw them at a bunch of other stops," Doug said.

The kindness of residents and travelers of the Iditarod trail and is what surprised Doug the most.

"Unbelievable, know, how accommodating everybody was and just wanting to help you out," Doug said.

