



MHP Capitol Update

Volume 2, Issue 10 March 12, 2007



Contents

[Capitol Notes](#)

[Committee Hearings](#)

[Bill Introductions](#)

[Bytes and Bits](#)

Capitol Notes

Setting Senate Targets

It appears that the Senate is in the final stages of setting targets for various budget committees. The end of last week saw a lot of private meetings and hallway confabs as various committee chairs and leadership made tax and budget decisions. We know that Senator Tomassoni who oversees the Economic Development Committee was intent on increasing the amount budgeted to housing beyond the governor's recommendations.

The rumor mill has it that the Senate's targets would be set low in order to generate pain among the various constituency groups seeking funding in the hopes of more hollering for revenue increases. We are also waiting to see if the Senate will sink a lot more one-time money into the budget reserve as well. There has been some discussion that the reserve needs to be higher to accommodate a possible economic downturn in 2009. A larger budget cushion might be the slight of hand needed to set aside money to up targets after the session break.

Housing Advocates Create Murmur, Not Roar

The big funding ask that various housing advocacy groups put in play a few weeks ago created some noise at the Capitol, but not a roar like a variety of other issues – smoking, environment, and deed tax (opposition). We checked with staff answering phones and emails and were pleased that housing supporters did make contacts with leadership on increasing targets, but were a tad disappointed that the numbers weren't larger considering the number of organizations that distributed action alerts. These efforts, though, did assist Capitol-types in making the case for increased funding.

You have a few more days to push House leadership on setting targets that are beyond the governor's budget recommendations. Don't wait any longer. Pick up the phone and call now!

Hearings, Hearings, and More Hearings

The next few weeks, in addition to setting budget and tax targets, will be consumed with hearings on legislation critical to housing. You will note below a partial listing of this week's mayhem. Policy bills are moving from committee to committee trying to make deadlines. Funding bills are getting a quick look with hopes of being added to omnibus budget bills. Tax committees are working overtime hearing bills that might make it into the final tax bill. It does appear that both the House and Senate plan to have a majority of their work done by April 2.

MHP staff and lobbyists are working diligently with individuals and organizations around the state to ensure that legislative priorities get hearings, have good testifiers, and the votes needed to pass into law. Your help is always welcome, whether it is a phone call or email to legislators or committee, a visit to the Capitol or assisting on testimony.

Spring Break – An Opportunity to Catch Up with Your Legislators

The session break, which begins on April 2, is a great time to corner your representative or senator at home. Pay attention for community meetings and issues gatherings in your area.

We speculated early on that leadership wanted most of the work done before the break in order to keep the troops in line on budget and tax issues. The week hiatus from the Capitol can often change pre-ordained outcomes if the folks back home kick up a ruckus. We'll have a good sense of where housing stands in the next few weeks, so concerted efforts might be able to swing a few more dollars or policy issues our way.

Call Leigh at 651-649-1710 ext. 119 (lrosenberg@mhponline.org) if you'd like to try to set something up or hosting a gathering with other housing supporters. Contact Barb at 651-649-1710 ext. 117 (bjacobs@mhponline.org) if you'd like help doing some media activities focusing on affordable housing in your area.

Committee Hearings

Please note committee meetings and schedules can change almost daily. Use the website below to sign up for daily schedules or contact a specific committee to get on their email notice list.

House

Property Taxes

Wednesday, March 14, 6:00 p.m., Room 500S, State Office Building

Agenda:

- **4d HF 1030 (Mullery) Low-income rental property classification 4d extended.**

Housing Policy and Finance

Tuesday, March 13, 10:00 a.m., Room 5, State Office Building

Agenda:

- **H.F. 1233 (Benson)** — Food shelf programs funding provided, and money appropriated.
- **H.F. 724 (Madore)** — Family homeless prevention and assistance program funding provided, and money appropriated.

Tuesday, March 13, 5:00 p.m., Room 500S, State Office Building

Agenda:

- **H.F. 939 (Kranz)** — Deed tax percentage adjusted, rental housing assistance provided, housing account for leverage opportunity established, and money appropriated.

Wednesday, March 14, 10:00 a.m., Room 5, State Office Building

Agenda:

- **H.F. 1131 (Moe)** — Capacity building grants funding provided, and money appropriated.
- **H.F. 1723 (Walker)** — AIDS prevention initiative focusing on African-born residents grants provided, and money appropriated.
- **H.F. 726 (Tschumper)** — Minnesota community action grants funding provided, and money appropriated.

For up-to-date information about House hearings and more, go to
<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/commemlist.asp>

Senate

Taxes

Thursday, March 15, 8:30 a.m., Room 12, Capitol

Agenda:

- Limited Market Value Report
- Tax Incidence Study Report
- **S.F. 1284 (Lourey)** — Sales tax exemption for Pine county judicial center construction materials, supplies and equipment.
- **S.F. 1737 (Koch)** — Clearwater sales and use and motor vehicle sales taxes imposition and bonding authority.
- **S.F. XXXX (Bakk)** — Ely local sales and use tax.
- **S.F. XXXX (Bakk)** — Cook County local option lodging and admissions taxes.

For more up to date committee schedules for the Senate, go to:
<http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/committees/>

Bill Introductions

House

Go to:

http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/cc/introductions.asp?session_year=2007&ls_year=85&session_number=0

Senate

Go to : <http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/orders/intros/index.php#header>

Bytes and Bits

Overdoing It

The Minnesota REALTORS® Association unleashed its membership on a number of senators on the Housing Committee last week and the results backfired. The targeted members received over 800 to 1000 emails but they were all identical emails, not individual and personalized. A few of the members in Committee commented that this tactic was not appreciated and then voted in support of increasing the deed tax.

Doing It Right

Though housing advocates' efforts did not generate tons of emails, they were not perceived as mass produced. You will note that MHP calls for action tend to give talking points, not a script, for this specific reason. It requires a bit more work on your part, but is considerably more effective.

Overheard at the Capitol

"They (Senate) are setting targets low in order to create a wave of support from spending constituencies for increased taxes. The House, though, is a different story. They don't even recognize inflation as part of budget puzzle and no one in a leadership position has mentioned taxes."

"Tax credits are nothing more than appropriations, so go to the Finance Committee, not Taxes, with your Housing Donor Credit proposal and get them to spend the money."

Distributed weekly during the legislative session and periodically outside of session, the **MHP Capitol Update** provides information about bill introductions, committee hearings, policy analysis, and political chatter in St. Paul. **MHP Capitol Update** is published by Minnesota Housing Partnership, and content is provided by MHP's lobbying team, Cindy Jepson and Julian Loscalzo. To share ideas for future issues, to ask questions, or to unsubscribe, please contact Barb Jacobs at bjacobs@mhponline.org or 651-649-1710 ext. 117.

Minnesota Housing Partnership's mission is to promote homes for all Minnesotans and to assist Minnesota communities in the creation and preservation of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people.