

State Senator Julianne Ortman Capitol Report



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**"Do what you can, with what you have, with where you are."
- President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)**

Dear Friend,

In these first few weeks, we got right down to business in committees and on the floor hearing legislation on Voter Photo ID, tort reform, and taking up a number of Governor Dayton's appointments.

We continue to make progress in passing the "Voter ID" constitutional amendment, which has had several hearings in the House and Senate. To ensure voter integrity, voters should be required to present an approved ID to participate in an election. We also took up and confirmed a number of Governor Dayton's appointments. The confirmations were controversial and made the news, particularly after the Governor responded to with criticism. In my commentary, "Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons," I responded to his comments: "Governor Dayton's decision to nominate Senator Ellen Anderson as Chair of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) was very controversial... Chair Anderson and the Governor have known for more than a year that she was not likely to be confirmed. There were no surprises, and our public review of her record has been respectful at all times. In the Senate we take very seriously our responsibility to carry out confirmations." To read the full commentary, please follow this link:

http://assets.matchbin.com/sites/2176/assets/F9R6_Ortman_statement.pdf.

As always, my staff and I are ready and available to assist you with any questions or thoughts you may have regarding legislation this session. I look forward to hearing from you.

Lawsuit Reform - Real Reform, Real Savings

Four lawsuit reform bills (Senate Files 149, 373, 429, and 530), passed by the Minnesota House and Senate, were vetoed by Governor Dayton last Friday. In my commentary "**Minnesotans' Best Interests Should Be the Governor's Only Agenda**," I responded to the Governor regarding the vetoes:

"Governor Dayton put his political agenda ahead of the best interests of Minnesota by vetoing lawsuit reform bills that passed both the Senate and the House with bi-partisan support. These common sense reforms would have made our courts more accessible and affordable for all Minnesotans: individuals, families and businesses, plaintiffs and defendants alike. As all who have ever been in Minnesota's justice system know, our courts are busy, over-burdened, and the time to trial is lengthy. The reforms were designed to provide more cost-effective resolution of disputes.

Conciliation Court is the fastest court in Minnesota; it is an informal venue where litigants can seek quick and inexpensive review of disputes of less than \$7500. Neither party is required to have an attorney, which makes the process cost-effective. Examiners review and assess evidence, and issue non-binding decisions (either party can take the matter to the District Court if not satisfied). The Governor vetoed a proposal to raise the limit for disputes to \$10,000, which would allow more cases to be heard in Conciliation Court. This is about equal access to justice as many Minnesotans cannot afford to bring their disputes to the District Court."

To read the entire response, please click here:

http://www.senate.mn/members/member_pr_display.php?ls=&id=4295.

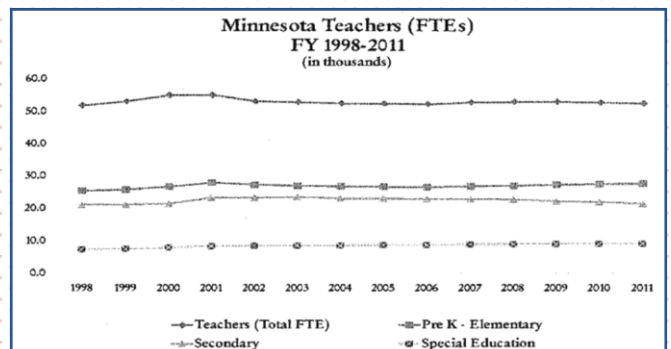
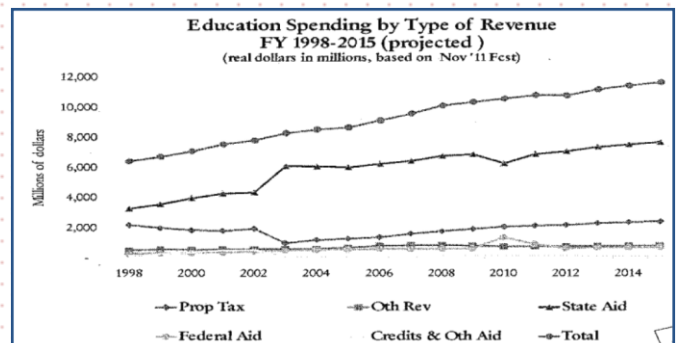
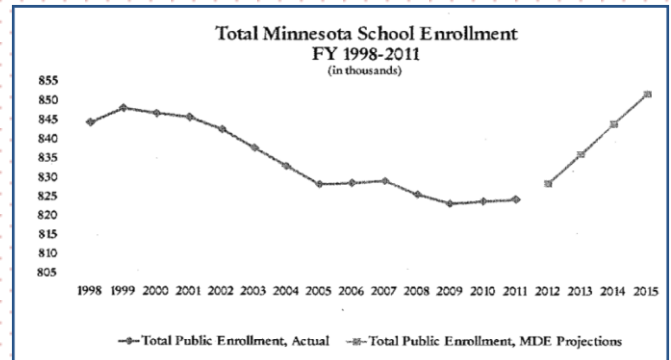




Tax Committee Gets Underway!

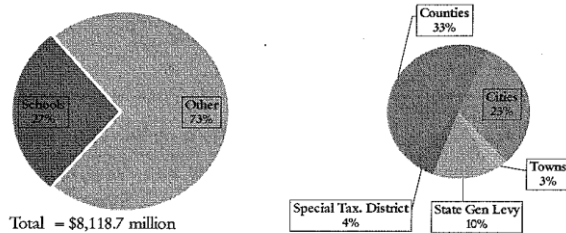
The Minnesota Senate Tax Committee has been focusing on education finance during our first few weeks of hearings. Although these hearings have been informational only, the testimony heard continues to strengthen my belief that the current structure of Minnesota's property tax system needs to be reformed.

Our Senate non-partisan staff shared data and trends in school financing and spending since 1998. Of particular import was the decline in student numbers – by almost 25,000 since 1998 – while the number of teachers remained at almost the exact same levels – and school spending continued to dramatically increase (see charts to the right). To view the Education Finance presentation, please click on the link in the “Stay Informed” box below.



Education Finance: Property Taxes

MN Property Taxes by Source
Pay 2011 Final



STAY INFORMED

- Fiscal Disparities Report:** <http://taxes.state.mn.us/property/pages/fiscal-disparities-study.aspx>
- Property Tax Increases at Record Lows:** <http://lmc.org/page/1/2012levies.jsp>
- Annual Tax Increment Report (Office of the Legislative Auditor):** <http://lmc.org/page/1/tifreport.jsp>
- Education Finance PowerPoint Presentation (Senate Non-Partisan Staff):** <http://tinyurl.com/6qermsy>

Recent Media Appearances by Senator Ortman

- Scott Hennen Show (Chairman of the Common Sense Club):** <http://scotthennen.com/live/>
- Chad Hartman Show (WCCO):** <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/category/watch-listen/wcco-am-shows/the-chad-hartman-show/>
- Pioneer Press Article “MN GOP Wants to Cut Business Property Taxes”:** http://www.twincities.com/politics/ci_19946292
- State of the State Speech & Response on Almanac:** http://www.mnvideovault.org/mpml_player_embed.php?vid_id=23152&select_index=0