

Rep. David Bly

Column

Minnesota House of Representatives

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Column: Put our community first as legislative session moves forward

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone who expressed their condolences for the loss of my mother, Mary. The Legislative Session has just under four weeks to go until our constitutionally mandated date of adjournment on May 21st. This past week saw the release of Republican budget priorities and the final deadline for most finance bills to make their way through a committee process.

The good news is, there are a lot of things we can agree on that could get passed quickly. As an example, Governor Dayton has asked that items with bipartisan agreement--protecting vulnerable seniors, addressing the opioid crisis, making schools safer, and shoring up our state pensions--be passed now. In addition we must prioritize a few other things such as fairly compensating those who work with people with disabilities and continuing our commitment to higher education by ensuring that the State Grant program remains stable for those wishing to attend college. If we pass those sooner rather than later we'll have a more orderly end of session.

Minnesotans value the effective and efficient state services we have. Keeping our roads plowed, our neighborhoods safe, our waters clean, and our schools funded is essential. That's why it's important that any budget changes we make this year are made without any shifts, gimmicks, cuts, or false financial assumptions that would undo the hard work done by DFLers to return fiscal stability to Minnesota after years of deficits.

The big ticket items before us that don't have an agreement yet are a tax bill and a public infrastructure bill, known as a bonding bill. Due to federal changes to the tax code, many Minnesotans may see their taxes go up if we don't make some changes at the state level. To plan for this, competing budget proposals have been presented. Governor Dayton has outlined a budget proposal that rolls back tax giveaways passed last year for corporations, big tobacco and the wealthy to fund tax cuts for regular Minnesota families. That allows us to help the people of our community while also funding important investments in expanding early childhood education and keeping tuition down at our colleges and universities. My

Republican counterparts have indicated the majority of their budget will be spent on tax breaks for the wealthy and big businesses.

I've heard from you about the things you value. As I meet with people at the Capitol I hear about their fears, their needs and the problems that keep them up at night. Today I met with dairy farmers who can't afford health care and correctional officers who are worried about not just their pensions, but their safety at work. Far too many Minnesotans are struggling to get by or create a better future because wages aren't increasing as fast as they should, healthcare premiums are unaffordable, the cost of a college education can seem out of reach, and then graduates are saddled with paying student debt rather than a home or having kids. In my final weeks in Saint Paul, serving as your state representative, I'm committed to making sure our community values are made the priority.

There's a lot to get done these final weeks and I welcome your input at 651-296-0171 or at rep.david.bly@house.mn.

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David Bly (DFL-Northfield) is the DFL-Lead on the Agriculture Policy Committee. A retired teacher, David has written extensively about building an economy that works for everyone.