



## WEEKLY SESSION UPDATE

January 25, 2019

It was a week full of paper pushing as the House and Senate both met only briefly to get bills moved into the proper committees and take care of other necessary procedures. So far, over five hundred bills between the two bodies have been introduced and there are no signs of this trend slowing down. The bills with the highest viability, however, cover topics such as gun control, legalizing recreational marijuana, and a hands-free driving bill. In the coming weeks these bills will have plenty of opportunities for discussion in various committees and have already garnered the attention of activists across the state.

Most committees wrapped up most of the agency overviews they have spent the past two weeks on and are moving into more substantive discussion about the issues at hand. The new committee structure in the House makes for busy schedules, but in the next few weeks we will see whether or not the flow of bills from one committee to the next will work with the high volume of bills being introduced.

### **The Shutdown**

Private businesses throughout the state are stepping up and finding ways to support the federal workers in their communities. Rep. Stephenson and Sen. Little introduced legislation today that would allow federal workers impacted by the shutdown to access interest-free loans from a variety of private partners giving them a lifeline until they start receiving back pay. The news today of the temporary re-opening of the government came after the press conference, but Stephenson noted that the House and Senate will both hope to continue moving the legislation until a more permanent fix is given to the federal budget. Under this legislation, federal workers impacted by the shutdown can borrow up to \$5,000/month for 3 months without interest kicking in for 90 days after the end of the shutdown.

### **Special Election**

Stu Lourey, a Tina Smith staffer and son to former State Senator-turned-Commissioner Tony Lourey, defeated Michelle Lee in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor primary on Tuesday for the Minnesota Senate District 11 seat. In what is looking to be an extremely high cost election, especially with Lourey's fundraising numbers at around \$30,000 with a week and a half to go, Lourey will now face off against current GOP Representative Jason Rarick in the special election on Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. For more further reading check out this article from the [Duluth News Tribune](#).

### **Next Gen**

**Via Jeremy Olson, *StarTribune***

A federal experiment grown out of the Affordable Care Act meant to reward hospitals for saving money on Medicare patients ended with two of the three Twin Cities participants dropping out when they instead both lost millions providing that care. The uneven outcome showed that Minnesota has a long way to go to achieve the promise of better health care for less money.

*Officials at Allina, Fairview and Park Nicollet remain bullish about this type of payment reform, because the U.S. health care system otherwise creates incentives for hospitals and doctors to order more tests and surgeries whether patients need them or not. Next Gen was a little-discussed but essential part of the federal Affordable Care Act, which sought to offset the rising cost of covering more Americans with health insurance by eliminating wasteful health spending. "We need payment models that reward us for better outcomes," Christensen said.*

Wasteful spending has been a hot-button topic at the state legislature for the past few years, in line with efforts to increase transparency and increase patient access to care. With the failure of this project to connect the dots between

decreased costs and higher patients health outcomes, many health professionals will be back to the drawing board to start planning the next strategy.

### **Provider Tax**

*Via [Take Action Minnesota](#)*

[On Wednesday], over 75 organizations—from labor unions to the Minnesota Council of Health Plans—[sent a letter](#) to Governor Walz and state leaders urging them to repeal the sunset on the health care provider tax. Each year, the health care provider tax generates nearly \$700 million for Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare, and public health programs.

### **Opioids**

*Via [Star Tribune](#)*

Minnesota legislators are reviving a proposal to raise millions of dollars to battle the opioid crisis by increasing fees on the companies that produce and distribute highly addictive prescription drugs. The plan would infuse \$20 million into a range of services, including addiction research, treatment and recovery programs and county-level social services for children who are neglected or abused by parents struggling with substance abuse. The increased funding would be paid for by a bump in annual fees on opioid manufacturers and distributors.

GOP Sen. Julie Rose and DFL Sen. Chris Eaton held a press conference with Hennepin County leaders to introduce bipartisan legislation to address opioid addiction and support affected families.

### **New fact sheet on regulation of in-office compounding**

*Via [Minnesota Medical Association](#)*

Following the tragic deaths of 64 patients in Massachusetts stemming from contaminated compounded drugs, regulators in Minnesota and nation-wide have taken special interest in the regulation of both pharmacy and in-office compounding. In 2014, the Minnesota Legislature passed laws regulating compounding that require physicians to meet the compounding standards established by the U.S. Pharmacopoeia (USP). New USP compounding standards will take effect Dec. 1, 2019. To help physicians better understand the laws and standards that govern in-office compounding, the MMA has created a [fact sheet](#) that provides a broad overview of the subject.

### **House HHS Finance overviews**

On Wednesday, the House Health and Human Services committee had a presentation of the MN Department of Health's base budget activities from MDH Commissioner Jan Malcolm. Commissioner Malcolm highlighted how the level of spending on health care services versus what is spent on prevention is out of line. She stressed the need to focus more on prevention to lower chronic diseases and their risk factors in order to lower costs and spending. She then gave an overview of the budget activities of MDH, followed by member questions, which included topics such as birth rates, racial disparities/inequalities and medical cannabis. A presentation on the history and overview of the Health Care Access Fund followed. Brief member questions followed.

### **Senate Higher Education Committee – U of M Medical Discovery Teams**

On Thursday, the Senate Higher Education Committee heard a presentation of the [Medical Discovery Teams](#) at the University of Minnesota. The Medical Discovery Teams address the state's most pressing health concerns by researching the following areas: opioid addiction, American Indian and rural health disparities, aging related diseases, and optical imaging and brain science. Below is a brief overview of each team's focus, the problem each addresses, research goals, and topics:

#### **Mark Thomas: Professor of Neuroscience – Medical Discovery Team on Addiction**

Problem: Addiction is widespread and hard to treat

- There are extraordinary financial and personal costs associated with addiction
- Addiction is a condition of the brain

Goals:

- To lead the nation in addiction neuroscience research
- Make rapid advancement in the understanding of brain mechanisms of addiction and relapse
- Translate those discoveries into effective therapies

Research Topics:

- Discover how to can disrupt brain tremors through brain stimulation,
- Working on non-addictive pain relief
- Vaccines that target addictions

**Neil Henderson: Medical Anthropologist – Medical Discovery Team on Memory Keepers**

Problem: Both diabetes and dementia are increasing across America in all populations, but especially Native Americans

- Minnesota has a much higher risk of Alzheimer's than other states in the Midwest
- Those with diabetes are more likely to get dementia

Goals: To support healthy aging in Native American and rural populations- work on the prevention and management of diabetes, and provide health equity

- Focusing on populations with higher amounts of AIDS

Potential Impact:

- Addressing this issues could save 766 lives a year
- Save \$2.26 billion/year (\$407 per individual)
- Improve early diagnosis abilities
- Have more successful methods of preventing or delaying diabetes

**Laura Niederhofer: Professor of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biophysics – Medical Discovery Team on Biology of Aging**

Problem:

- Every day through 2030, 10,000 Americans will turn 65
- 90% of people over 65 have at least one chronic disease, and more diseases quickly accumulate
  - At this pace, by 2030 the funds needed to treat Alzheimer's will exceed our current federal defense budget

Goal: To improve the health and quality of life for the elderly in MN

- Wants to discover the fundamental mechanisms that drive aging and then develop drugs that can target these processes
- Would like to extend the health span of the elderly – so people can live independently longer

*Senescent cells*: old and damaged cells that are part of the aging process.

- Team is working on "senolytic" drugs to target the senescent cells to keep people stronger longer
- For instance, cancer survivors age faster than others because they have more damaged (senescent) cells

Potential Impact:

- Will funnel federal research funds to MN
- Build a drug discovery pipeline that will require the capacity to screen for new drugs (would like to repurpose existing cancer treatments), partner with pharmaceutical companies, and begin clinical trials
- Result in healthier and stronger elderly Minnesotans

**Prakash Kara: Professor of Neuroscience – Medical Discovery Team on Optical Imaging and Brain Science**

Problem: Neurological diseases cost the United States nearly \$800 billion a year

- Nearly one in five adults have a mental illness
- The brain is the most complicated organism in the universe and we do not have advanced ways to study it

Goal: Find new ways to see inside the human brain

- Would like to use laser imaging techniques to produce detailed wiring diagrams of the brain
  - Currently we have more of a boxy, categorical view of the brain instead of an interconnected picture

- Will use laser imaging to find ways to bend light to view the brain without hurting it

Impact:

- Curing brain disease: optical imaging technologies will help find ways to prevent or treat conditions
- International branding: Will make a name for the U of M and Minnesota as we lead the way in mental health treatment

### **Bill introductions of interest**

[HF 211](#) (Schultz) – Parking privileges for physically disabled persons through medical statement provided by licenses physical therapists authorized

[HF 237](#) (Gruenhagen) – Health insurance; notification prior to provider network changes requirement

[HF 265](#) (Dehn) – Cannabis and cannabis-infused products consumption and possession by individuals 21 years of age or older allowed, commercial regulation of cannabis required, and constitutional amendment proposed

[HF 287](#) (Zerwas) – Health care providers direct secure messaging address required

[SF 328](#) (Jensen) – Carver county hospital construction or moratorium exception modification

[SF 349](#) (Jensen) – Interoperable electronic health records system mandate elimination

[SF 350](#) (Jensen) – Physician restrictive noncompete agreements prohibition

[SF 352](#) (Jensen) – Health insurance premium individual income tax credit establishment

[SF 353](#) (Jensen) – Prescription Drug Affordability Act; appropriation

[SF 354](#) (Jensen) – Any willing provider health carrier health plan option offering requirement

[SF 360](#) (Hayden) – Links of Care program model at West Side Community Health Services colon cancer screening grants appropriation

[SF 399](#) (Hayden) – MinnesotaCare provider taxes repeal repeal

[SF 445](#) (Ingebrigtsen) – Security screening systems addition to ionizing radiation-producing equipment fees; examination requirement exemption; appropriation

[SF 495](#) (Nelson) – Prescription drug reimportation program establishment