



State Legislative Update for January 29 – February 12, 2016

Committee Hearings

House:

Rep. Sarah Anderson, chair of the State Government Finance committee, took her committee on the road to Owatonna on Wednesday, the 10th. The meeting was held at the city's VFW hall. Members in attendance included Albright (Prior Lake), M. Anderson (Lake Shore), S. Anderson (Plymouth), Carlson (Crystal), Daniels (Faribault), Dettmer (Forest Lake), Loonan (Shakopee), Nash (Waconia), Petersburg (Waseca), Pugh (Chanhassen), Runbeck (Circle Pines) and Schultz (Duluth).

To start, House Fiscal staff handed out a prepared document showing the General Fund appropriations for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs from fiscal year 2004 through 2017. There was brief discussion among committee members regarding the agency's budget before Chair Anderson mentioned the audit language that was included in last year's State Government Finance bill. "We want to avoid what happened at the federal level," she said.

The meeting then opened to the public for questions and comments.

A question was asked about programs for Veterans employment and compensation for business owners that employ Veterans. Rep. Dettmer, chair of the Veterans Affairs division, responded by talking about pending legislation that included business tax credits for companies that hire Veterans, eliminating income tax on military pensions and an expansion of the Homestead Tax exclusion.

Someone offered an idea for a state law requiring businesses to provide a disclosure statement for Veterans so that they don't end up paying for services that are available from County Veteran Service Officers or Veteran Service Organizations for free. It was determined that, while not a big issue it could be a good courtesy to have available.

The topic of conversation then shifted towards charitable gambling. VFW Post 3273 Commander Thule asked the committee to be sensitive of changes because any dollar that is shifted to fund things like sports stadiums means less money to use on behalf of Minnesota's Veterans.

A discussion over the lack of use for Veteran Service Organizations by the latest generation of Veterans began. It was concluded that younger Veterans are seeking online contact to share their experiences. Along with that, younger Veterans don't have the same worry about receiving earned benefits that older generations had to fight so hard to obtain from the government. Commander Thule talked about the need for VFWs to adapt as posts are no longer just a place for drinking and smoking with buddies, but rather a family oriented spot.

The meeting wound down with a conversation about federal healthcare benefits and the struggles that come from Tricare and Veterans Choice.

The State Government Finance committee has scheduled two similar meetings next week. On Tuesday, February 16th the committee will be at the Coon Rapids VFW (1919 Coon Rapids Blvd NW). The second meeting will be on Thursday, February 18th in Pine City (305 8th St SW).

Senate:

The Capital Investment committee will meet on Wednesday, February 17. The agenda includes Debt Capacity Guidelines and an overview of the governor's bonding proposal, which includes MDVA projects.

Bill

House:

Bill introductions of interest to Veterans-

Johnson, C. introduced:

[H. F. 2396](#), A bill for an act relating to capital investment; appropriating money for a Veterans memorial in St. Peter; authorizing the sale and issuance of state bonds.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Newton introduced:

[H. F. 2444](#), A bill for an act relating to disabled Veterans; providing certain exemptions from taxes and fees on motor vehicles and watercraft for eligible Veterans with a disability, including certain registration taxes, license plates and licensing fees, title fees, driver's license and identification card fees, and general sales taxes and motor vehicle sales taxes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, sections 86B.415, by adding a subdivision; 86B.870, by adding a subdivision; 163.051, subdivision 1; 168.012, by adding a subdivision; 168A.29, by adding a subdivision; 171.01, by adding a subdivision; 171.06, by adding a subdivision; 297A.67, by adding a subdivision; 297B.03.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Lien introduced:

[H. F. 2452](#), A bill for an act relating to transportation; providing certain exemptions from taxes and fees for eligible Veterans with a disability, including certain registration taxes, license plates fees, title fees, driver's license and identification card fees, and motor vehicle sales taxes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, sections 163.051, subdivision 1; 168.012, by adding a subdivision; 168A.29, by adding a subdivision; 171.01, by adding a subdivision; 171.06, by adding a subdivision; 297B.03.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Anderson, M. and Pugh introduced:

[H. F. 2468](#), A bill for an act relating to Veterans; providing a grant to Eagle's Healing Nest; appropriating money.

The bill was referred to the Committee on State Government Finance.

Johnson, S. introduced:

[H. F. 2505](#), A bill for an act relating to taxes; individual income; modifying the credit for past military service; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 290.0677, subdivisions 1a, 2.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Laine introduced:

[H. F. 2550](#), A bill for an act relating to taxes; individual income and corporate franchise; providing a tax credit to employers that employ qualified Veterans under age 35; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 290.06, by adding a subdivision.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Howe introduced:

[H. F. 2554](#), A bill for an act relating to crime; clarifying military member and adding Veterans to offense of impersonation; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, section 609.475.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Nornes introduced:

[H. F. 2562](#), A bill for an act relating to taxes; sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax; exempting the sale or lease of specially equipped motor vehicles sold or leased to disabled Veterans; amending Minnesota Statutes 2014, sections 297A.67, by adding a subdivision; 297B.03.

The bill was referred to the Veterans Affairs Division.

Newton and Dettmer introduced:

[H. F. 2565](#), A bill for an act relating to military Veterans; appropriating money for certain rent subsidies.

The bill was referred to the Committee on State Government Finance.

Senate:

The Senate has not introduced any bills while the legislature is not in session.

The 2016 session is scheduled to begin at noon on Tuesday, March 8.