

QUICK LOOK: 2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

2015 SESSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In November 2014, Minnesota voters elected a divided government – with a DFL Governor, and Republicans controlling the House of Representatives. During the 2015 Legislative Session – with a \$1.8 billion budget surplus – Governor Mark Dayton and the Minnesota Legislature compromised to make needed investments in the collective better future of all Minnesotans. Some of those accomplishments included:

MAJOR NEW INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION – Governor Dayton fought to maximize our investments in education. Republicans initially proposed investing just \$157 million in our students this session. But the Governor convinced lawmakers to invest \$525 million in E-12 education, including:

- Access to child care and early learning for up to 6,600 more young learners across Minnesota
- More funding for every school, with 2% increases in each of the next two years
- Reducing the Head Start waiting list, giving over 1,200 kids a great start in school
- Long-overdue investments in American Indian Education
- Additional resources and support for English Language Learners and American Indian students

NEW INVESTMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – The Governor fought to secure funding to make higher education more affordable by proposing a tuition freeze at all state Colleges and Universities in his Budget. Republicans wanted to invest \$57 million in higher education. But Governor Dayton convinced lawmakers to invest \$166 million to make higher education more affordable, including:

- Tuition relief at the University of Minnesota and MnSCU campuses
- Increased funding for the State Grant Program for direct financial aid to students
- Returning the U of M Medical School to national prominence

CLEAN WATER – Governor Dayton fought to secure new protections that will enhance and protect water quality in Minnesota. Working with a wide variety of stakeholders, the Governor successfully enacted a new buffer strip law that will cover an additional 110,000 acres of land around the state's lakes, rivers, and streams in permanent vegetation – helping prevent pollution, and keeping our waters clean.

NEEDED INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS – Governor Dayton and the Legislature agreed on a \$140 million Jobs Bill that makes needed investments in critical infrastructure projects, including:

- Poultry and veterinary labs to help prevent and respond to diseases like avian influenza
- Railway safety grade separations at three rail crossings across the state
- Lewis & Clark water project for public health and economic development in SW Minnesota
- Higher education campuses improvements, flood mitigation efforts, and disaster relief.

STRONG FAMILIES, SAFER COMMUNITIES – Governor Dayton and the Legislature made needed new investments in stronger, safer communities. Some of those measures included:

- Reforms to the child protection system, to keep all kids safe from abuse and neglect
- More law enforcement officers to track down and apprehend dangerous fugitives
- Supportive and safe housing for homeless and sexually exploited youth
- Workforce housing for Minnesota communities experiencing job growth
- Access to employment for Minnesotans with disabilities
- Support to help prevent Minnesotans with mental illness from becoming homeless

BETTER HEALTH CARE – Governor Dayton and the Legislature made needed investments and reforms to improve health care for seniors, vulnerable adults, and all Minnesotans, including:

- Major new investments in nursing homes statewide
- Historic investments in mental health that will improve the lives of many Minnesotans
- Tax-free ABLE savings accounts for Minnesotans with disabilities
- A task force that will help chart the future for quality, affordable health care in Minnesota

PREVENTING HARMFUL LEGISLATION

Governor Dayton fought to prevent a long list of harmful legislation from becoming law. Republicans passed policies eliminating important environmental protections, eliminating health care for working families, rolling back clean energy policies, and giving away billions in permanent tax giveaways to wealthy individuals and corporations.

SAVING HEALTH CARE FOR 100,000 MINNESOTANS – Republicans in the Legislature adamantly tried to eliminate MinnesotaCare – a move that would have eliminated health care for nearly 100,000 working families. Governor Dayton fought, and successfully preserved MinnesotaCare coverage.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT – Republicans in the Legislature sought to roll back environmental protections – from granting perpetual amnesty to polluters, to allowing cities another 15 years to clean up contaminated drinking water. Governor Dayton vetoed these and other harmful measures, and negotiated a stronger bill that preserved essential environmental protections.

MAINTAINING NATION-LEADING CLEAN ENERGY STANDARDS – Republicans in the Legislature worked to roll back Minnesota's nation-leading Renewable Energy Standard, the Conservation Improvement Program, and other clean energy programs that save Minnesotans money and prevent carbon emissions. Despite their passage by House Republicans, Governor Dayton insisted these provisions be removed from the bill. Republicans relented, and removed the provisions from consideration in conference committee.

FIGHTING FOR TAX FAIRNESS – Republicans in the Legislature attempted this session to enact billions of dollars in permanent tax giveaways to wealthy individuals and corporations. Governor Dayton, on the other hand, proposed tax cuts directed to middle class and working families. The Governor prevented unnecessary tax cuts for the wealthy and will continue fighting for middle class taxpayers.

PRESERVING ESSENTIAL CONSUMER PROTECTIONS – House Republicans sought to eliminate the rate review division at the Minnesota Department of Commerce that approves prices for health plans filed by Minnesota health insurers – a process that helps protect the interests of consumers, and ensures that any rate increases are reasonable and justified. Governor Dayton vetoed these measures, and secured full funding to provide adequate review of all proposed health insurance rates in Minnesota.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Despite the many good things that were accomplished this session, Governor Dayton remains strongly committed to delivering on these additional priorities in the upcoming 2016 Legislative Session. With roughly \$1 billion left on the bottom line, state lawmakers have the resources to accomplish these important objectives for Minnesotans.

ALL DAY PRE-K – Governor Dayton remains fiercely committed to enacting all-day preK in Minnesota – ensuring over 47,000 four-year-olds have the opportunity to attend preschool, free of charge. This important measure will build on the successes of all-day Kindergarten, save parents money, help prepare all students for success in school, and dramatically narrow our state's achievement gap.

TRANSPORTATION – Governor Dayton will continue fighting to secure a long-term, stable source of funding to build and maintain the roads, bridges, and transit systems Minnesota needs to succeed and grow in a 21st Century economy. Next session, he will continue his efforts to enact a 10-year, \$11 billion investment in our aging, under-funded transportation systems.

RAILWAY SAFETY – This year, Governor Dayton proposed major improvements to railway safety in Minnesota. Republicans in the Legislature staunchly opposed new investments in railway safety, instead siding with the railroad industry and stalling needed progress to improve the safety of Minnesotans. The Governor will continue fighting next session for the safety improvements our communities need.

BROADBAND FOR GREATER MINNESOTA – In 2014, Governor Dayton and the DFL Legislature invested \$20 million in competitive rural broadband grants. This year, Governor Dayton requested \$30 million to continue this critical investment in Greater Minnesota. Instead, House Republicans only provided \$10.6 million, and refused to invest a dollar more. The Governor will continue working to provide additional funding for this initiative, which is critical for the businesses and livelihoods of Greater Minnesota residents.

BIGGER JOBS BILL – Governor Dayton proposed an \$842 million Jobs Bill this session that would have funded critical infrastructure projects statewide, creating nearly 24,000 new jobs. The Legislature passed a much smaller \$180 million bonding bill. The Governor will continue his push next session to fund a growing backlog of needed investments in our state's infrastructure.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUTS – At the outset of the 2015 Session, Governor Dayton proposed hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts for middle class families. Next session, he will strongly advocate for his Child Care and Dependent Tax Credit and the Working Family Tax Credit – providing needed tax relief to hundreds of thousands of low- and middle-income families in Minnesota.

PRESERVING ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT – Republicans in the Legislature eliminated the State Auditor's ability to review county and municipal finances – undermining the integrity and accountability of government in Minnesota. Governor Dayton will continue fighting in the next legislative session to restore the duties and necessary oversight functions of the Office of the State Auditor.