



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

116 Veterans Service Building ♦ 20 West 12th Street ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 1, 2016

The Honorable Tom Bakk
Senate Majority Leader
3113 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Kurt Daudt
Speaker of the House
Room 463, State Office Building
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable David Hann
Senate Minority Leader
Room 147, State Office Building
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Paul Thissen
House Minority Leader
Room 267, State Office Building
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Legislative Leaders:

On November 11, 2015, I first raised the issue of needing a Special Session to address critical needs for thousands of Minnesotans. Despite support for a Special Session in the Senate and among DFL House members, it took until January 2016 for working groups to be established to address unemployment benefits for people on the Iron Range, measures to address economic disparities in communities of color, and authorizing Minnesota to implement the federally required REAL ID. These are needs that cannot wait until the regular session convenes in March.

Majority Leader Bakk, the Senate DFL caucus and House DFL caucus have consistently expressed support for a Special Session. However, Speaker Daudt has stated that he and his caucus members think these critical issues can wait to be addressed during the regular session.

At our meeting Friday, January 29, 2016, I understood that we have come to near agreement on two out of three issues.

1. **Unemployment Insurance for Mine Workers.** Senator David Tomassoni and Representative Tom Hackbarth indicated they have nearly come to agreement on language to extend unemployment benefits to the thousands of Minnesotans who have exhausted benefits on the Iron Range. I reiterate my support for the attached language which includes 26 weeks of extended unemployment benefits. Commissioner Clark Sieben will continue to work with Senator Tomassoni and Representative Hackbarth on language we can all agree to.

2. **REAL ID.** I support Rep. Peggy Scott's attached language which will lift the prohibition on the Commissioner of Public Safety and allow her and the Department to engage in planning for implementation of REAL ID so Minnesota can move forward with full implementation of REAL ID during the regular session. I appreciate Speaker Daudt's stated commitment to fully address this issue during the regular session to ease REAL ID adoption for Minnesotans who choose to do so prior to the federal deadline.
3. **Economic Disparities.** There remains significant disagreement regarding how to best address the immediate economic disparities communities of color are facing in our state. There is no dispute that from 2013 to 2014, the median income for Black Minnesotans fell by 14 percent —dropping from \$31,493 to \$27,440 in a single year. The report also showed that the poverty rate for Black Minnesotans rose from 30.5 percent to 34.7 percent — compared to an 11 percent poverty rate for the state overall.

While I agree that closing the achievement gap is critical to addressing economic disparities long-term, that worthy issue should be addressed during the regular session. I support more immediate measures to close economic gaps which include proposals in Sen. Champion's package; funding for a Human Rights office in St. Cloud, and an audit to assess the state's employment, contracting and workforce enforcement practices. I maintain that at least \$15 million should be invested to improve economic outcomes in communities of color in a Special Session.

As you know, we are quickly approaching the regular session. On behalf of the thousands of Minnesotans who would benefit from a Special Session, I ask you to be clear whether or not your Caucuses support addressing these three critical needs – unemployment insurance for iron range workers, measures to address economic disparities and making progress toward implementing REAL ID. I also ask for your commitment to limit the length of a Special Session to only one day. The thousands of Minnesotans who are counting on our action, and I, look forward to your swift response.

Sincerely,



Mark Dayton
Governor

Enclosure: Representative Scott's REAL ID bill language
DEED Unemployment Insurance for Mine Workers bill language