

KEY LEGISLATORS

This document has been prepared as a tool to improve the effectiveness of grassroots MSCF faculty communications with their legislators (lobbying). There are 67 state senators and 134 representatives in the Minnesota legislature. Obviously, faculty members do not have the time or energy to maintain contacts with this many people. Besides, not all legislators have equal influence or interest in faculty/higher education issues.

Several groups of legislators have particularly important roles with regard to higher education funding and policy. These groups include the House and Senate leadership, the higher education committees, and campus area legislators. In addition, the Commission on Pensions and Retirement plays an important role regarding faculty retirement benefits. Below is brief description of these groups and the roles they play.

House Leadership

The Speaker of the Minnesota House is Representative Margaret Anderson Kelleher (DFL).

The Speaker has enormous powers under the House rules; the speaker appoints the chairs and the members of standing committees, refers bills to committees, and appoints conference committees to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions of bills. Through these powers the Speaker can have enormous influence on legislative outcomes and the power of individual members. This in turn makes her very influential with her colleagues on issues, particularly on budget priorities.

The Majority leader of the Minnesota House is Representative Tony Sertich (DFL). The Majority Leader takes a leadership role in managing floor debates, chairs the meetings of the majority caucus and, as Chair of the Rules and Legislative Administration Committee, coordinates the operation of the House (hiring staff, proposing rules of operation, setting deadlines, etc.).

The House Finance Committee is Representative Lynn Carlson (DFL). The House Finance Committee oversees the overall budget process to make sure that revenues balance with expenditures. All appropriation and tax bills must go through the committee on the way to the House floor. If a budget Committee exceeds its spending "target" the Ways and Means Committee can "strip" the bill to bring it within the spending limit.

The Chair of the Ways and Means Committee is Representative Loren Solberg (DFL). The Ways and Means Committee helps the overall budget process, along with the House Finance Committee to make sure revenues balance with expenditures. The Ways and Means Committee must reconcile finance and revenue bills with the resolution that it must pass 25 days after the February budget forecast has been announced. The Ways and Means Committee can alter the bill to bring it within spending limits when spending bills are sent to said committee. The Ways and Means Committee reviews the tax bill and reacts to police and procedures that are laid out in bills that are sent to its committee.

The House Higher Education Committee

All House Bills affecting higher education are eventually referred to the House Higher Education Committee. This committee hears the bills, takes public testimony, and develops a comprehensive spending/policy bill within the spending target for the committee. This committee divides up the available money between MnSCU, the U of M, and the Office Higher Education (OHE), which administers student financial aid programs.

The Chair of the House Higher Education Committee is Representative Tom Rukavina (DFL).

The Chair plays the lead role in putting together the higher education bill and moving through the process to final passage. He will be the person who will negotiate with leadership and other members of his caucus to determine how much is spent on higher education and will present the bill on the House floor.

Senate Leadership

The Senate has a leadership structure that is different from that of the House. **The President, Senator Jim Metzen (DFL)**, does not appoint the chairs or members of committees as does the Speaker of the House. He basically chairs the floor sessions of the Senate in addition to fulfilling ordinary duties and assignments as a Senator.

Most of the power of the leadership in the Senate is centered in the position of **Senate Majority Leader, currently Senator Larry Pogemiller (DFL)**. The Majority Leader plays a key role in running the Senate, leading the majority caucus, and determining budget priorities. He, in consultation with **Finance Chair, Richard Cohen (DFL)** and **Tax Chair, Tom Bakk (DFL)** will basically determine how much the Senate will propose to spend on various sectors of government, including higher education.

The Senate Higher Education Committee

The powers and duties of the Senate Higher Education Committee mirror those of the House Higher Education Committee. They assemble the Senate's version of the higher education bill, within the spending targets set by the leadership. **The Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee is Senator Sandy Pappas (DFL)**. The powers and duties of the Chair mirror those of the House Chair.

Campus Area Legislators

Campus Area Legislators are an obvious group to court for support of higher education. Some of these people occupy positions of leadership or serve on one of the higher education committees. Even if they don't serve in a key position, they can be helpful by speaking up for higher education during caucus discussions and supporting higher education funding bills on the floor.

The Pension Commission

One area of legislation, besides higher education, that MSCF gets involved in is pension and retirement issues. With a couple of small exceptions, pension issues are not negotiable under PERLA, meaning we have to deal directly with the legislature to get pension improvements. This is a very specialized and complicated area of legislation and the legislature has set up a

special commission made up of six Senators and six Representatives to make recommendations on pension issues. Unless a bill receives a favorable recommendation from the Pension and Retirement Commission, the House and Senate committees will not hear it.

Conference Committees

After the higher education bills pass the House and Senate, a conference committee of five Senators and five Representatives will be appointed to work out the differences between the House and the Senate bills. This committee is always chaired by the House and Senate Higher Education Chairs, and usually includes the most influential members of each of the Higher Education committees.