



LEGISLATIVE EVALUATION ASSEMBLY OF MINNESOTA, INC.



POST OFFICE BOX 25803, WOODBURY, MN 55125

www.lea-mn.org

2023 REPORT ON MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE RELEASED

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Contacts: Don Lee
John Augustine

(651) 234-0052
(651) 398-9316

president@lea-mn.org

Honorees Announced

Ten Minnesota state legislators have been honored in the Legislative Evaluation Assembly's 2023 Report on the Minnesota Legislature. Twenty-seven legislators received an honorable mention.

Honorees: Senators Bruce Anderson, Cal Bahr, Steve Drazkowski, Justin Eichorn, Steve Green, Eric Lucero, and Jordan Rasmusson; Representatives Josh Heintzeman, Harry Niska, and Isaac Schultz.

Honorable Mention: Senators Glenn Gruenhagen, Jeff Howe, John Jasinski, Mark Koran, Bill Lieske, Warren Limmer, Jason Rarick, Paul Utke, Nathan Wesenberg, and Torrey Westrom; Representatives Pam Altendorf, Ben Bakeberg, John Burkel, Ben Davis, Marj Fogelman, Walter Hudson, Jim Joy, Jon Koznick, Shane Mekeland, Tom Murphy, Tim O'Driscoll, Brian Pfarr, Joe Schomacker, Peggy Scott, Chris Swedzinski, Paul Torkelson, and Mike Wiener.

The Fast Track to Chaos:

This year saw the Minnesota legislature pass sweeping new entitlements, regulations, tax increases, and social policy changes at a pace not seen in decades, perhaps ever. It was enough not just to move us toward Hayek's metaphorical road to serfdom, but rather put us on the fast track to chaos, in the express lane of that road.

The volume of change was so great that LEA felt the need to expand its printed report by four pages this year to allow us to adequately summarize and evaluate 23 bills. "Even after expanding the report from 12 to 16 pages, we struggled to include mention of the large number of major, radical changes in policy, statutes and appropriations," noted LEA President Don Lee.

The traditional authority parents have over their children was discarded in multiple bills. The reproductive options act language made no allowance for parental notification before their minor children make life-altering decisions. We saw this again in the "gender care" bill that will have the state ignore court custody rulings from other states and could even declare minors in our state as abandoned if parents do not defer to the "gender care" preferences of their minor children.

Respect for the integrity of the law and elections was further undermined by many bills stuffed with ethnic set-asides, by the bill granting documentation to illegals without any visible distinction from official citizens' documents, and through an elections bill that will facilitate mailing ballots to a "permanent absentee" list and turn every application processed by a state agency into a voter registration application.

More laws passed this year are likely to be challenged in court than in recent memory. The refusal to recognize court rulings on "gender care" decisions from other states may violate the U.S. Constitution. Then there is the challenge to freedom of religion from the restrictions on post-secondary enrollment options, the challenge to freedom of association from prohibiting law enforcement officers from joining unapproved groups, the speech regulations and restrictions in the election bills, and the expansion of felon voting without changing relevant language in the Minnesota Constitution, to name a few more prominent examples.

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Despite a projected \$18 billion budget surplus, the ruling majority (in control of the governorship as well as both bodies of the legislature) pushed through a variety of significant tax increases and fees (dedicated

housing and transit metro sales taxes, payroll taxes to fund paid employee leave, a net investment income tax, a retail delivery fee, increased license tab fees, fuel taxes, and motor vehicle excise taxes, etc.). With these increases, they increased spending by an incredible 38 percent from the previous biennial budget, and on top of that passed a sizable bonding bill that increased the state's long-term debt. Besides everything previously mentioned they passed very costly "carbon-free by 2040" energy mandates that could have devastating consequences for energy reliability and the economy as a whole.

Leaders exploited their leverage to include in many of the budget bills major policy changes that deserved much more scrutiny. Some particularly egregious examples include 1) adding a free college entitlement to households with less than \$80,000 annual income to the higher education budget bill, 2) adding "reasonable force" prone restraint language, seasonal unemployment coverage for hourly school employees, "ethnic studies" mandates, and changes in school-levy renewal procedures to the E-12 education budget bill, 3) adding a bias speech incident database, retroactive caps on probation, and "red flag" gun confiscation orders language to the judiciary/public safety budget bill, 4) adding a transit-fare elimination pilot program and a metro governance-reform task force to the transportation budget bill, and 5) joining a national-popular-vote interstate compact, adding more regulation of electioneering communications, and removing caps on appointees' pay and legislative oversight of public employee contracts as part of the state government budget bill.

We also noted a number of processes in 2023 that evaded citizen input and accountability of the legislature. Large omnibus bills came out of conference committee with controversial provisions that had not been passed in the original floor versions by either legislative body. Example: Gas tax increase indexed to inflation. Also, bills that had controversial provisions removed before being passed on the floor had those provisions re-inserted in conference committees with no opportunity to amend the bill on final passage. Examples: changing language of MN human rights act related to physical or sexual attachment to children by an adult in the public safety bill, and making post-secondary enrollment option program restrictions for colleges with statements of faith in the E-12 education bill.

Effect upon Scoring:

Many laws passed this year by an unchecked majority were extremely radical and revolutionary. The one consolation is that more individual legislators scored very highly, although the value of the scores is diminished because almost none of them impacted whether the legislation passed. Except for the bonding bill where they needed a supermajority, the majority made almost no concessions to the requests of the minority, so there was little reason for the legislators outside the majority caucuses to vote for these bills. "If your legislators didn't score highly enough this year to at least get honorable mention opposing these radical bills, there is clearly room for improvement, regardless of party," LEA vice president John Augustine added.

About the LEA:

Established in 1972, the Legislative Evaluation Assembly of Minnesota (LEA) is a non-partisan and non-profit organization, established to inform the citizens of Minnesota of both important legislation and the voting performance of each Minnesota state legislator. LEA bases its evaluation on our declared American founding principles of self-evident truths and inalienable rights. These principles provide a basis for a constitutionally limited government established to sustain life, liberty, justice, property rights and free enterprise. LEA encourages the use of the material in its Reports, in whole or in part, with attribution, by any group or individual.