

Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

SPECIAL EDITION: A Guide to the New Laws from the 2005 Legislative Session

The 2005 session of the Minnesota Legislature may have been a contentious one, but it held some good news for battered women and battered women's programs, especially provisions in the Public Safety Omnibus Bill. This far-reaching bill included funding for battered women's programs and shelters, a new felony domestic strangulation law, and extensive legislation on sex offenders and human trafficking.

This special edition of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women newsletter is your guide to the new laws from the 2005 session. This edition covers laws specific to domestic violence, but also includes legislation on a variety of issues that affect battered women and their children in our state, such as child care, the Minnesota Family Investment Program, custody determinations under orders for protection, and changes to child support. We thank the House Public Information Services Office, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Child Care Works, Ready4K, and NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota for information on new laws used in this newsletter.

For more information on these new laws, you can order the packet from the Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project's New Laws Training (co-sponsored by MCBW) by calling (612) 343-9842 or toll-free at (800) 313-2666. The New Laws Trainings will continue through September in Minnesota: **September 8-9** in Marshall, **September 15-16** in Duluth, and **September 19-20** in Brooklyn Park. For registration information, please go to BWLAP's web site at www.bwlap.org.

Members of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women should keep their eyes open in the following weeks for our Legislative and Policy Survey. This survey will be critical to determining our legislative agenda for the 2006 legislative session. If you have any questions about legislative issues, please call Lonna Stevens, Public Policy and Legislative Coordinator at (651) 646-6177 or (800) 289-6177.

MCBW Priority Legislative Initiatives Adopted in the Public Safety Omnibus Bill

House File 1*/Senate File 609/Chapter 136

House Chief Author: Smith

Senate Chief Author: Ranum

Effective Dates: various

The Public Safety Omnibus bill, one of the few to pass during the regular session, contained important provisions for battered women and battered women's programs, including funding for crime victim services and shelters and a new felony crime of domestic assault by strangulation—both top priority initiatives of MCBW members in 2005. The bill also included a number of domestic violence related changes as well as extensive new laws focusing on sex offenders, human trafficking, and methamphetamine production and use.

Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound) and Sen. Jane Ranum

(DFL-Minneapolis) were the chief authors of this bill, which easily passed both houses with bipartisan support. Financial provisions of the law became effective July 1, 2005. Other provisions are effective Aug. 1, 2005, unless otherwise noted.

Funding for Battered Women's Programs

The Public Safety Omnibus bill includes more than \$1.65 billion in spending for the biennium, about a 16% increase over current year spending for corrections, courts, law enforcement and public safety. A small but important percent of this funding was earmarked for crime victim services (battered women's, abused children's, sexual assault, and general crime services) and will result in the restoration of many of the grants cut through the redistribution of funds by the Office

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2005 Legislative Scorecard

Legislation:	Does MCBW support this legislation?	Page number
Public Safety Omnibus Bill	+	1
Temporary custody in OFF cases	+	5
Spousal support collection continued	+	6
Child support changes	*NS	6
Child welfare law changes	NS	7
MFIP cuts reduced	+	7
Increases in court filing fees	-	7
Education and child care funding	+	8
Health care: MinnesotaCare preserved	+	8
Minimum wage increased	+	8
Women's reproductive rights curtailed	-	9
Housing and homelessness funding	+	9
Elimination of Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women	-	10

*NS: Needs more study on the effect on battered women and their children before MCBW can support or oppose this legislation.

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Public Safety Omnibus Bill

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of Justice Programs judicial district funding process last year. This funding totals \$1.27 million per year for fiscal years 06-07 and \$1.27 million per year for fiscal years 08-09 for crime victim services. Battered women's shelter and safe home funding was also appropriated at \$400,000 per year for both the FY 06-07 and FY 08-09 bienniums. MCBW's original goal was to restore \$2 million per biennium of the more than \$5 million that has been cut from shelters over the last three years. This was a victory nonetheless for this difficult and contentious budget session.



Staff of the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault pose with Governor Tim Pawlenty, Senator Jane Ranum and Representative Steve Smith at the Capitol on the day of the signing of the Public Safety Omnibus Bill into law.

Felony Crime of Domestic Assault by Strangulation

In Minnesota it is now a felony to strangle a family or household member. This is an enhanceable offense punishable by up to 3 years in prison. (Art. 17, Sec. 8)

Previously, most non-lethal domestic assaults by strangulation were charged as misdemeanor fifth-degree assaults, rather than felony assaults, despite the lethal nature of strangulation and its prevalence in domestic violence. Adding a specific law regarding domestic strangulation has given police and prosecutors a specific charge to use in strangulation cases, and also provides an impetus for professionals involved in these cases to be trained in investigation and detecting evidence of strangulation.

The bill to enhance criminal penalties for domestic assault by strangulation was a collaborative effort.

MCBW worked closely with the Minnesota County Attorney's Association on this bill and sought key testimony for hearings that was provided by representatives of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office, the Minneapolis Police Department, the Battered Women's Justice Project, and most importantly, Alyson Olson, a young woman who courageously shared her story of surviving domestic strangulation only to have the assault charges dropped against her abuser. MCBW is grateful for the support of the Hennepin Fatality Review Team and for the timely release of their 2004 report, *One Life Lost as a Result of Domestic Violence is One too Many*, which recommended greater consequences for abusers who strangle their victims in the course of an assault. This legislation was the result of tremendous bipartisan support headed by Sen. Ranum and Rep. Smith.

Other Domestic Violence Related Laws

The authority of the court was expanded so that a domestic abuse no contact order can be issued in a criminal proceeding for domestic abuse, harassment, or stalking committed against a family or household member; violation of an order for protection; or violation of a prior domestic abuse no contact order. (Art. 17, Sec. 5)

Employees are protected against retaliation from their employer when they need to take reasonable time off from work, with advance notice, to be involved in court proceedings because of domestic violence such as an order for protection or harassment restraining order hearing, or because a close family member was the victim of a heinous crime. (Art. 9, Sec. 23)

People convicted of premeditated first-degree murder will face life in prison without the possibility of parole just as the "worst of the worst" sex offenders, including causing the death of a minor while committing child abuse, when the perpetrator has engaged in a past pattern of child abuse; and causing a death while committing domestic abuse, when the perpetrator has engaged in a past pattern of domestic abuse upon the victim or upon another family or household member. (Art. 17, Sec. 9)

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Public Safety Omnibus Bill

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Focus on sex offenders

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault and their allies successfully advocated for extensive legislation on sexual offenders, including some of the following:

First- and second-degree criminal sexual offenders will face life in prison without the possibility of release when their crimes involve force, violence or a dangerous weapon, and either two or more heinous elements exist or the offender has a previous sex offense conviction and one heinous element exists. (Art. 2, Sec. 21)

The law creates a new crime known as "criminal sexual predatory conduct" that applies when an offender commits a predatory crime motivated by sexual impulses or as part of a predatory pattern of behavior with criminal sexual conduct as its goal. The statutory maximum sentence for this offense is 25 percent longer than for the underlying predatory crime. (Art. 2, Sec. 20)

Other sex offenders could be given indeterminate sentences with the possibility of being on supervised release after serving the minimum sentence. Several factors must be considered when placing an offender on supervised release, including the possible risk to the community, progress in treatment, behavior while in prison, psychological evaluations, past criminal history, and other relevant conduct of the offender. (Art. 2, Sec. 5)

The law gives the Department of Human Services access to the predatory offender registry and requires that administrators of health care facilities be notified if a sex offender is going to live in their facility. Communication about sex offenders who come from other states to live in Minnesota is also strengthened. (Art. 3, Sec. 2)

Sex offenders are barred from attending their own community notification meetings, which are required when Level III offenders leave prison to serve out the remaining one-third of their sentences under supervision in the community. (Art. 3, Sec. 14)

A conference committee dropped House provisions, opposed by MNCASA, for chemical castration of certain sex offenders and special license plates and driver's licenses that would have publicly identified sex offenders.

Human trafficking

The Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women led a successful effort to address the growing problem of human trafficking in Minnesota. The commissioner of public safety is required to report annually to the Legislature on the money forwarded to the commissioner under this section and distributed to crime victims' organizations providing services to trafficking victims. The Department of Public Safety has received funds to research and develop a plan to address human trafficking and assist victims of the crime.

Labor trafficking has been made a felony offense, punishable by up to 15 years in prison, a fine of up to \$30,000, or both. In addition, a person who knowingly removes, confiscates, or destroys the passport, immigration documents, or identity documents of another person to further the crime of sex or labor trafficking is guilty of a crime punishable by up to 5 years in prison, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. A victim of labor trafficking may bring civil suit against the person or company that trafficked him or her. A company that is convicted of trafficking crimes may be ordered to dissolve or reorganize, suspend its license, and/or surrender its charter. Terms used in trafficking cases are defined, including "blackmail," "debt bondage," "forced labor or services," "labor trafficking," and "labor trafficking victim" for purposes of sections 16 to 22. The terms "sex trafficking" and "sex trafficking victim" are also defined. "Promoting the prostitution of an individual," is amended to include engaging in the sex trafficking of an individual. This is a felony punishable by up to 20 years in prison if the victim is under 18, and 15 years if the victim is 18 or over.

It is now an acceptable defense for prostitution charges under Minnesota Statute 609.324 if the defendant was a victim of labor and/or sex trafficking who can prove that she/he committed the act only under compulsion by another, whose threats created a reasonable fear in the mind of the defendant that if he/she did not commit the act, the person would inflict bodily harm on the defendant.

Proceeds from forfeitures resulting from prostitution and trafficking offenses must be distributed as follows:

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Public Safety Omnibus Bill

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- a) 40% must be forwarded to the appropriate local agency for the use of law enforcement;
- b) 20% must be forwarded to the prosecuting agency that handled the forfeiture; and
- c) 40% must be forwarded to the commissioner of public safety for distribution to crime victim organizations providing services to victims of trafficking offenses.

Methamphetamine crackdown

There are tougher penalties and new crimes around methamphetamine production and use in Minnesota, including criminalizing meth-related activities that impact children and vulnerable adults, establishing a penalty of up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. (Art. 7, Sec. 12)

Other areas of interest

The harassment and stalking crime is expanded to include monitoring with the use of technology, thanks to an MNCASA initiative. (Art. 17, Sec. 46)

It will be a crime to knowingly provide false information to a police officer. The law also establishes a crime for falsely reporting police misconduct when a person knows the allegations are not true. (Art.

17, Sec. 30)

The definition of "public place" is expanded for purposes of the statutes related to prostitution to include a motor vehicle on a public street, alley, parking lot or driveway that connects a parking lot with a street or highway. (Art. 17, Sec. 23)

The definition of "victim" is expanded for purposes of the statutes related to crime victims' rights to include family members, guardian, or custodian of a minor, incompetent, incapacitated, or deceased person. (Art. 8, Sec. 22)

An all felon predatory DNA database is established in Minnesota and requires all convicted felons to submit a DNA sample. The new law also requires those arrested for certain violent and predatory offenses to submit a DNA sample after a probable cause determination. The samples would be destroyed if charges are later dismissed or a person is found not guilty. Parents or guardians of juveniles must be contacted before DNA is taken from their child. (Art. 12, Sec. 1)

Domestic Abuse to be Given Higher Priority by the Courts in Temporary Custody Determinations in Order for Protection Cases:

HF2110*/SF1920/CH76

House Chief Author: Smith

Senate Chief Author: Neville

Effective Date: 5/25/2005

When child custody and visitation issues are being considered by the court in an order for protection hearing, domestic abuse will play a greater role in any determination, under a new law authored by Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound) and Sen. Thomas Neville (R-Northfield). The bill returns the focus of the court to the safety of the victim and the child when awarding custody and parenting time in the context of a domestic abuse hearing and order for protection.

Under an order for protection (OFP), the court can award temporary custody and/or parenting time

and the primary consideration in determining custody or parenting time in this proceeding is intended to be the safety of the victim and her children. In the past, domestic abuse issues were only allowed to be considered in custody decisions in an OFP hearing if the abuse victim was the child.

The new law change gives courts more leeway to consider the safety of both the child and the abused parent. In addition to these primary safety concerns, the court can also consider "best interest factors" that are relevant, but the court is not required to make specific findings on all of the best interest factors. This change makes it clear the safety of the victim and her children is the primary concern when determining custody in an OFP hearing.

Spousal Support Collection to Continue

HF1578/SF1479*/CH116

House Chief Author: Liebling

Senate Chief Author: Lourey

Effective Date: 5/27/2005

A new law clarifies the state statute authorizing the Department of Human Services to continue collecting support payments in spousal maintenance-only cases, if mandated by the court. In August 2004, the department had concluded the statute was ambiguous as to whether it should be providing this service. Letters were sent to parties in the approximately 1,700 cases being handled notifying them

that the service would stop in June 2005.

Spousal support is rarely awarded, but can be if there is a compelling reason. Parties who use the department to collect support payments are usually either older, disabled, or have experienced domestic abuse. If the department had discontinued this service, a number of battered women would have risked their safety by having to deal directly with their abusers to receive spousal maintenance.

Controversial Child Support Changes Approved

HF1321/SF630*/CH164

House Chief Author: Smith

Senate Chief Author: Neuville

Effective Dates: various

The state's child support and custody laws have been significantly changed with new provisions added that focus primarily on how child support will be calculated using the parents' combined gross income (e.g. "income shares"). The law does not allow for modification of custody or child support agreements that are in place prior to Jan 1, 2007. (Sec. 32) A one-time, six-month review will be held to make sure that compliance of child-support and parenting time is in place. (Sec. 4)

Note: MCBW has formed a child support work group to further analyze the impact of this legislation and to determine what changes, if any, to seek prior to the 2007 enactment date. Contact Lonna Stevens at (651) 646-6177 or lstevens@mcbw.org for more information.

Support calculation

The law lays out a guide to help courts determine child support based on the parents' combined income. It defines basic support as the dollar amount ordered for a child's housing, food, clothing, transportation and education costs, and other expenses relating to the child's care. It does not include monetary contributions for child care expense and medical and dental expenses. This is a separate calculation. If the obligor has parenting time ordered at least once every two weeks, there is an automatic 12% reduction in child support. Child support may be adjusted every two years based

upon a change in the cost of living. (Secs. 5, 26)

Health care coverage

A divorcing couple will need to decide which party must carry health care coverage for the child; the cost of premiums and how it will be allocated between the parties; the circumstances, if any, under which the obligation to provide health care coverage for the child shifts from one party to the other; and if appropriate health care coverage is not available for the child, whether a contribution for medical support is required. In determining whether a party has appropriate health care coverage for the joint child, the court must evaluate the health plan using certain factors, including: accessibility to services, comprehensiveness of the policy, affordability, and special medical needs of the child. (Sec. 22)

Child care provisions

Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties and approved by the court, work-related or education-related child care costs of joint children are to be divided between the parents, based on the proportionate share of the parties' combined monthly parental income for determining child support. (Sec. 23)

The law changes in this new method of determining child support are extensive and comprehensive. Since there is over a year until the changes go into effect, there will almost certainly be discussion and possible changes to this law in the 2006 legislative session.

Child Welfare Law Changes Made

HF1889*/SF1710/CH159**House Chief Author:** Wilkin**Senate Chief Author:** Lourey**Effective Date:** 8/1/2005

A number of technical changes will be made in child welfare laws under a new law sponsored by Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) and Sen. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) that includes the governor's policy recommendations and changes requested by advocates.

Under alternative response for maltreatment of children, the law defines "family assessment" as a thorough assessment of child safety; it defines "investigation" as a way to gather facts about the child's safety and determine if protective services are needed; and it defines "substantial child endangerment" as an act that substantially endan-

gers a child's well-being by a person responsible for a child's care who endangers the child's well-being.

The local welfare agency now will decide whether to conduct an assessment or an investigation after receiving a report; it is compelled to do an investigation if there is "substantial risk" to the child's safety. Family assessments must be completed in 45 days, and tribal social services agencies are added to the definition of "local agency." The agency can also move from an investigation to a family assessment if there is not substantial child endangerment and must document the reason for terminating the investigation. One of the most important notes is that there will be no administrative reconsideration in family assessments since there is no determination concerning maltreatment.

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP): Cuts Reduced and New Penalties Avoided

Special Session: HF139/SF107*/CH4**House Chief Author:** Bradley**Senate Chief Author:** Berglin**Effective Date(s):** various

In 2003, the legislature cut MFIP income for households receiving both MFIP and Supplementary Security Income (SSI) by \$125 per month for each SSI recipient. For example, an MFIP grant to a family with 2 members on SSI was reduced by \$250 per month. This penalty was reduced in 2005 so that the monthly MFIP grants for households with family members on SSI will now be reduced by a maximum of \$125 per month, restoring income to 1,300 households with more than one family member receiving SSI. This is \$3.35 million in restored funding per year for families who receive both MFIP and SSI.

Efforts to increase the \$50 per month housing penalty for families receiving both MFIP and subsidized housing to \$200 per month failed again in the 2005 session (similar legislation was proposed but not enacted in 2004). An increase in the housing penalty would have reduced the income of families receiving MFIP grants as well as the funds available to public housing authorities for affordable housing.

Current law still stands on training limits. MFIP participants must work 20 hours per week to access education and training lasting longer than 12 weeks. Participants are allowed up to 24 months of education (subject to the 20 hours per week work requirement).

Increases in Court Filing Fees

HF1321/SF630*/CH164**House Chief Author:** Smith**Senate Chief Author:** Neuville**Effective Date:** 5/27/2005

Beginning July 1, 2005 there is an increase in court filing fees:

- Child support modification motions now cost \$55; and
- Initial divorce filing fees now cost \$300. Some counties assess additional fees. For example, Hennepin County adds a library fee for a total of \$302.

Small Increases for Education and Child Care

Special Session: HF141*/SF104/CH5

House Chief Author: Sykora

Senate Chief Author: Stumpf

Effective Dates: Various

Head Start received \$4 million in new funding, which takes the state funding for this critical school readiness program beyond the level it received before funding cuts in 2003. Early Childhood Family Education received \$5.5 million in new funding, which restores about two thirds of the 2003 funding cuts. Unfortunately, School Readiness did not receive any new funding.

HF1889*/SF1710/CH159

House Chief Author: Wilkin

Senate Chief Author: Lourey

Effective Date: 8/1/2005

Beginning in January 2006, there will be one-time increase of 1.75% in the rate at which Minnesota reimburses most child care providers participating in the Child Care Assistance Program, or CCAP. Governor Pawlenty had proposed continuing the

rate freeze that began in 2003, which would have cut child care assistance funds by \$70 million in the next biennium. The 1.75% increase means a smaller cut of \$61.5 million.

An additional \$4.1 million was provided to reduce the parent child care co-pays in the CCAP, which were increased in 2003. Families eligible for CCAP may see a reduction of up to \$200 per year in their co-payments.

Unfortunately, these small changes are not enough to cover the costs of providing care. Advocates had worked for legislation that would restore parent co-pays and eligibility for the CCAP program to 2003 levels and to base reimbursement rates on the current cost of child care. Many providers will likely continue to pass on costs and/or close centers and many parents may be forced to decide whether they can afford child care. Advocates will continue to work for needed improvements. See www.childcareworks.org or www.ready4k.org for more detailed information.

Health Care: MinnesotaCare Preserved

Special Session: HF139/SF107*/CH4

House Chief Author: Bradley

Senate Chief Author: Berglin

Effective Dates: various

MinnesotaCare, a program to provide basic health care to low-income Minnesotans, saw the largest gains over the Governor's proposed budget for 2005-2007. Governor Pawlenty had proposed eligibility changes that would have removed adults without children (and some parents) from MinnesotaCare. Legislators and advocates pushed to prevent cuts and win back funds for the

program. Session outcomes include:

- No change to eligibility for MinnesotaCare. Adults without children are still eligible for the program.
- Funding was restored to lift caps on both medical and dental services (\$5,000 and \$500 per year, respectively).
- MinnesotaCare beneficiaries now have co-pays for prescription medicines (capped at \$12 per month).
- There are slight increases in premiums for MinnesotaCare beneficiaries.

Minimum Wage Increases

HF48/SF3*/CH44

House Chief Author: Rukavina

Senate Chief Author: Anderson

Effective Date: 8/1/2005

A new law requires employers with annual gross sales of at least \$625,000 to increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$6.15 an hour. Employers with annual gross sales less than \$625,000 will need to increase the minimum wage from \$4.90

an hour to \$5.25 an hour. Employers will be able to pay employees under 20 years \$4.90 an hour for the first 90 consecutive days of employment.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the federal minimum wage for covered, nonexempt employees is \$5.15 an hour. The state's last minimum wage increase for employees of larger companies was Sept. 1, 1997, and Jan. 1, 1998, for employees of smaller companies.

Step Backward for Women's Reproductive Rights

HF952/SF917*/CH124

House Chief Author: Finstad

Senate Chief Author: Sams

Effective Date: 7/1/2005

Reproductive rights for Minnesota's women were weakened in 2005 when the "Positive Alternatives Act" was signed into law. Authored by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples) and Rep. Brad Finstad (R-New Ulm), this legislation appropriates \$2.5 million in funding over two years to Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs). CPCs are the 'provider' arm of the anti-choice movement. They are unlicensed and usually offer free pregnancy testing, counseling, supplies, and ultrasounds to women with unplanned pregnancies. They also do not offer information on all legal options (birth, adoption, abortion) available to a woman, and they generally refuse to provide referrals to real medical clinics.

The law specifically disqualifies from funding any organization that performs abortions or directly refers women seeking abortions to an abortion provider. This disqualifies most clinics and medical facilities, even those that provide significant support to women who choose to carry pregnancies to term. There is no exception for organizations that refer women for abortion to protect the health of the woman. Ironically, the law prevents grants from going to Children's Home Society and Lutheran Social Services, two of the state's largest adoption agencies, because those agencies refer women to abortion providers.

Compromise language, advocated for by groups like NARAL Pro-Choice Minnesota and Planned Parenthood, was originally included in the bill. It would have provided basic privacy protections for

women visiting a CPC, to give medically accurate information about abortion to women, and allow organizations like Children's Home Society to receive funding. An amendment to drop this language, sponsored by Rep. Mary Liz Holberg (R-Lakeville), passed the House 80-52.

Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Minneapolis) moved to amend HF1422, the Omnibus Health Finance bill, with a measure to require hospitals to provide sexual assault survivors with "medically and factually accurate and unbiased written and oral information about emergency contraception and prophylactic antibiotics for treatment of sexually transmitted diseases." The amendment failed 58-75.

Legislation authored by Sen. Thomas Neville (R-Northfield) and Rep. Steve Smith (R-Mound), titled the Parental Notification Data Act, would have restricted minors' access to abortion services by imposing a number of burdensome reporting requirements on abortion providers and targeting judges who grant judicial bypasses. Currently, the notification law states that a minor may only obtain an abortion more than 48 hours after written notice has been delivered to and signed by both parents. A minor may obtain an abortion without parental notification only by (1) declaring she is a victim of abuse or neglect, or (2) by securing a court order stating that she is mature and capable of informed consent or that an abortion is in her best interest. This bill did not leave committee and was not voted on, although it is expected that it will be back next session.

For more information on reproductive rights, go to www.mnnaral.org.

Housing and Homelessness: Deep Cuts Averted

Special Session: HF78/SF69/CH1

House Chief Author: Ozment

Senate Chief Author: Bakk

Effective Dates: various

Governor Pawlenty had proposed cutting the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency's budget by \$15 million and the House proposed a cut of \$8.5 million. Thanks to organizing efforts by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and other housing and homelessness groups, the MHFA budget was reduced by only \$1 million. Funding was also shifted

from some MHFA programs to fund a \$4 million increase to the Housing Trust Fund for the Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness. In addition, the proposed \$13 million cut to the Challenge Program (workforce housing) was successfully stopped.

HF3/SF1/CH20

House Chief Author: Dorman

Senate Chief Author: Langseth

Effective Dates: various

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Housing and Homelessness

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\$12 million in bonding was passed for supportive housing with a goal of ending long-term homelessness. The funding will go to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for loans and grants for publicly owned permanent rental housing for persons experiencing long-term homelessness, defined as persons who have been without a permanent residence for at least 12 months or on at least four occasions in the last three years or are at significant risk of lacking a permanent residence for at least 12 months or on at least four occasions in the last three years.

Special Session: HF139/SF107/CH4

House Chief Author: Slawik

Senate Chief Author: Dibble

Effective Dates: various

The Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill included \$10 million for a new services fund to provide integrated services needed to stabilize individuals, families, and youth living in supportive housing. In addition, the Health and Human Services

Omnibus bill included \$500,000 in new funding for transitional housing for the 06-07 biennium.

Governor Pawlenty had proposed a permanent tax increase on low-income renters by reducing the renter's tax credit by 20% in 2007 and 25% in 2008 and 2009, a cut of more than \$30 million. Another bill in the House would have reduced the renter's credit by \$66 million. The Renters' Credit Coalition organized to protect the 11% of Minnesota households that receive the Renters' Credit. There was no cut to Renter's Credit in the final omnibus tax bill.

In addition, the Office of the Legislative Auditor recommended that a study be conducted on the impact that policy changes and funding cuts since 2001 have had on human service programs in Minnesota.

For more information on legislation relating to homelessness, please go to the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless' web site at www.mnhomelesscoalition.org.

Legislature Eliminates Commission on the Economic Status of Women

In a disappointing move, the Minnesota Legislature voted to eliminate the Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women (LCESW), which advised the legislature and provided information and statistics on women in Minnesota. For 29 years, this office has gathered information on population characteristics, educational attainment and enrollments, marital and parental status, household characteristics, labor force status and employment characteristics, and basic information on women's legal and economic rights. The LCESW also provided supporting research and materials to measures with bipartisan support, such as battered women's program funding, no-fault divorce laws, pay equity for state employees, and training for displaced homemakers. The women and girls of Minnesota have made great progress in the 29 years of the Commission's existence, but we are very far from equality.

Even this session, two bipartisan bills were signed into law due to the work of the LCESW: the bill to authorizing the Department of Human Services to

continue collecting support payments in spousal maintenance-only cases and the extensive provisions in the Public Safety Omnibus Bill to fight human trafficking.

As these bills were being voted on, legislators were voting to delete the enabling statutory language for the LCESW, move the functions of this office under the umbrella of the Legislative Coordinating Committee, and eliminate two part-time positions. Only one position remains to carry forward with the work of ensuring that the legislature has an easily accessible clearinghouse for accurate, factual and nonpartisan information and recommendations on all aspects of women's economic status in Minnesota. "There is a myth that we don't have sexism anymore. It's all solved and we can all go home and sleep well," said Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), one of the commission's 10 members, in a recent interview with the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Welcome to MCBW's Newest Member Programs!

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women is pleased to introduce the member programs that recently have joined the Coalition:

- Deborah's Place, Richfield
- Domestic Abuse Project, Minneapolis
- Equay Wiigamig, Red Lake
- Family Advocacy Center of Northern Minnesota, Bemidji
- International Self-Reliance Agency for Women, Minneapolis
- Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, St. Paul

If your program is interested in MCBW membership, please call Danielle Kluz at (651) 646-6177 or go to our web site at www.mcbw.org/membership.htm for more information.

Benefits of MCBW Membership:

- Discounted rates and scholarship eligibility for MCBW trainings such as Domestic Violence 101, Legal Advocacy, Legislative Organizing, etc.
- Scholarship eligibility for special events such as the annual Violence Against Women Action Day at the Capitol.
- Discounted rates and scholarship eligibility for

the MCBW Statewide Conference and Annual Membership Meeting.

- Technical assistance, media relations support, research, and resources from our staff.
- Discounted rates for many of MCBW's materials and curriculums.
- Participation in our networks, such as the Women of Color and Native American Women's Network.
- Public policy and legislative advocacy on a state and federal level.
- A voice in shaping our legislative and policy agenda through emerging issues discussions, needs assessments, the Legislative Advisory Committee, and the Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy for Women Committee.
- Participation in MCBW's e-mail discussion lists, with up-to-the-minute news and resources as well as discussion with advocates all over the state.
- MCBW's twice-weekly e-mail update with news, resources, and funding opportunities.
- Opportunities for networking with other members around the state, including the monthly audioconference discussion series.
- Use of our library of books and videotapes.
- Eligibility to shape the priorities and activities of MCBW at our Annual Membership Meeting.

MCBW Members: *SAVE THE DATE!*

The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women Annual Membership Meeting

November 3-4, 2005

Location TBA, Twin Cities

Stay tuned for more information...



Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

590 Park Street
Suite 410
St. Paul, MN 55103

Voice: (651) 646-6177 or
(800) 289-6177
Crisis Line: (651) 646-0994
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Web: www.mcbw.org

Member



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MCBW Board and Staff on Capitol Hill to advocate for the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

L-R: Board Member Robin Dietz-Mayfield, Executive Director Cyndi Cook, Public Policy and Legislative Coordinator Lonna Stevens and Board Member Vickie McCollum.

For more information on how YOU can help MCBW organize for the reauthorization of VAWA, please go to our web site at www.mcbw.org.

Help Support Battered Women's Services in Minnesota

I want to help stop violence against women by supporting the mission of MCBW.
Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Please return the completed form with your contribution to:
Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women
590 Park St., Suite 410
St. Paul, MN 55103

We thank you for your generous support of MCBW.