

TAX

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cuts for these groups would result in a total tax cut of \$301 million.

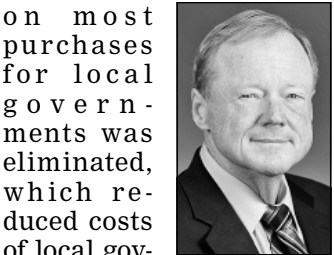
The plan also calls for the repeal of the three business-to-business taxes passed during the last legislative session. Two of these taxes, on labor service charges for repair and maintenance of business equipment, and on purchases of telecommunications equipment by telecommunications providers, went into effect July 1. The third, a tax on storage and warehousing services of business related goods, goes into effect on April 1. Repealing these taxes would provide a tax cut of \$232 million for businesses.

The actual impact of these taxes on the Borderland economy is hard to determine, International Falls Area Chamber of Commerce president Faye Whitbeck said.

“Very important is the potential for serious impact, particularly from a warehouse and storage tax, given our intentions for the multimodal warehouse project and a foreign trade zone,” Whitbeck said. “Several of the business-to-business taxes would work to our disadvantage in terms of site attraction because, obviously, prospective clients closely compare state conditions and operating costs.”

Dayton’s plan also provides for \$15 million in tax cuts to spur innovation and job creation. The Angel Investor Tax Credit, which offers tax credits for startup businesses and entrepreneurs, would be expanded.

During the last legislative session, sales tax



Rep. David Dill

on most purchases for local governments was eliminated, which reduced costs of local governments and helped keep property taxes steady, according to a release. Extending this exemption would provide \$25 million in tax cuts.

The governor’s plan also calls for eliminating the gift tax and simplifying the estate tax, which would provide \$43 million in tax relief, according to a release.

All these tax cuts add up to \$616 million in tax relief, with \$617 million available for the budget reserve. After allocating \$162 million for essential expenditures, like Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding and a raise for homecare workers, that leaves \$455 million in increase to the state’s budget reserve.

HOUSE FINANCE BILL

Thursday the House passed House File 1777, a bill cutting taxes for middle-class Minnesotans and repealing the three business-to-business taxes. Rep. David Dill said he voted in favor of the bill because of the positive budget forecast and the desire to eliminate previous budget maneuvers.

“I voted to eliminate the marriage penalty, support other federal tax conformity issues, remove the business-to-business taxes adopted in 2013 and return tax dollars to the folks at home,” Dill said in a release.

The House’s finance bill is different from the governor’s proposal, but the

two are “largely similar,” Swenson said, with the proposal including more provisions than what the House passed. The biggest differences between the two, Swenson said, are the governor’s proposal includes expansion of the child care tax credit, repealing of the gift tax, and changes to the estate tax.

When Congress changes federal tax law, it’s up to the states to decide whether to conform to the changes at the state level. During the last legislative session, the House included federal tax conformity for 2013 and beyond, but this did not end up in the final budget signed into law. The legislation passed by the House provides \$200 million in middle-class tax cuts through permanent federal tax conformity.

Highlights of HF 1777 include:

■ 650,000 families will see an average tax decrease of \$115 by eliminating the “marriage penalty,” which results in a total cut of \$111 million.

■ A cut of \$36 million for low-income working families by matching the state’s Working Family Credit with the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. According to a release, this means more than 500,000 working families will see an average tax decrease of \$300.

■ A cut of \$26.4 million for students and parents paying for college and students paying off student loans.

■ Thanks to a \$3.9 million tax cut for new homeowners through deduction of mortgage insurance premiums, 80,000 new homeowners will see an average tax cut of \$60.

■ A tax cut of \$6.7 million for businesses will make tax

filing simpler.

The House bill would also repeal the three business-to-business taxes, enacted as part of the 2013 budget.

Bill Blazar, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce senior vice president of public affairs and business development, said in a statement repealing the business-to-business taxes has bipartisan support, and the House bill reflects legislators listening to their constituents.

“Legislators have clearly been hearing from their constituents about the negative impact of these business-to-business taxes on the state’s economy,” Blazar said. “We now ask Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk and members of his caucus to join ranks and act quickly to repeal the three taxes by April 1 before they do any more damage to jobs and businesses.”

PROPERTY TAX

A report released last week from the Minnesota Department of Revenue summarized property taxes statewide, and found overall property taxes after refunds in 2014 will be decreasing for the first time since 2002.

The report showed a property tax decrease of \$8 million in 2014, compared to an average yearly increase of \$332 million since 2002. According to a release, the decrease was calculated by adding all property tax levies and subtracting property tax refunds and credits.

Locally, in Koochiching County, the property tax levy for 2014 decreased 0.3 percent from 2013, according to the report. International Falls and Littlefork did not increase their levies for 2014, and Ranier’s levy for 2014 increased to \$150,000, from \$140,000 in 2013.

DEER

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Inside the office at Up North Builders sat sisters Kendra and Shelana Ysen, showing maps of identified feeding sites to a line up of men waiting for confirmation of their site and an orange ticket to present to Stavseth.

Just inside the door of the office was their grandfather, Jim Ysen, who handed out fliers outlining deer feeding protocol.

Ysen said he felt compelled to help the deer this winter, and noted proudly that each of his granddaughters were successful deer hunters. “And I’m still hunting,” he added. “I got a deer this fall.”

Ysen said feeding the deer in an effort to keep the herd alive and hopefully healthy is no different than a farmer feeding his stock intended for slaughter.

But even more important than harvesting a deer, several people said, is continuing the deer-hunting tradition.

“There’s nothing like a shack to bring a family together,” Ysen said.

Bernath, an avid deer hunter, agreed.

“It’s about tradition, going out and having fun, not about killing deer,” she said. “I see lots of deer and sometimes I don’t pull a gun up. You learn a lot about animals out there.”

Keeping young people interested in deer and the sport is also important, she said, and was pleased that a number of younger Trails End members involved in the distribution effort. “It’s the future — our kids,” she said.

Helping an animal that can’t help itself is human nature, she said.

“If you help them, would let them die?” she asked. “It’s in your heart.”

Trails End Chapter member Dave Harder and owner of Up North Builders allowed the distribution to take place at his business, Bernath noted. But even more than that, she said Harder allowed the feed to be delivered there, has his workers unload it, and will store it there for distribution on Saturdays. She said Harder’s crew of Mike Gedde and Josh Harder worked hard to make the distribution operate smoothly.

CONTINUED EFFORT

Bernath said feed will be distributed from 8 a.m. to noon each Saturday at Up North Builders until the

program ends at green-up time.

Foley said the initial amount of feed distributed was conservative to try to stretch it as far as it could. But each Saturday the ration of feed will be increased as the deer adapt to the manufactured food. The feed contained 14-percent protein and 4-percent fat.

Volunteers distributing the feed are asked to document the number of deer they see, specifying the number of adults versus fawns, and their general physical conditions, said Foley.

“We hope they see more deer each time they put out food,” she said. “But they could also see fawns laying dead. We know that.”

She acknowledged that some people involved in the deer feeding are frustrated because it seems late in the season to try to help. However, she said the formal process had to be followed. The state requires a group to request the emergency feeding program start, which MDHA did in February. The program’s guidelines call for it to begin if the winter severity index is projected at 100 or more in mid-February.

The winter severity index for the International Falls area was 143 last week, reported Larry Petersen, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources area wildlife manager in International Falls.

Foley said deer feed will be distributed to DNR identified deer yards, many of which will be locally accessed by logging roads. However, she said snowmobiles will also pull sleds carrying the feed into more remote areas and some people who have been tamping down trails for deer using snowshoes will use that method to pull feed in on sleds.

Some people have been frustrated by finding out that their areas are not included in the feeding program, she said, but urged people to understand that the guidelines must be followed to ensure the program continues. “People take it personally,” she said.

Foley should know how people feel about the feeding program. She assisted distribution Thursday through Saturday at Moose Lake, Wright, Esko, Cook, Virginia, Hibbing, Grand Rapids and International Falls.

Bernath said people need not be an MDHA member to participate in the program, but she said she’d be happy to sign up new members. Call Bernath for information at her home at 283-8196, and leave a message.

MARY

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WHAT DO WE CALL YOU?

As Thydean’s weekly visits became more and more permanent, Paul was unsure of what students should call their beloved visitor.

Thydean had a suggestion.

“I said, ‘Well, my name is Mary and I’m a grandma, how about grandma Mary?’” she said with a smile.

The nickname stuck and she proudly said she has hundreds – if not thousands – of grandchildren she’s come to know and love throughout the decade.

“I have 18 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren of my own,” she said. “But all the students are my grandchildren. I love them all – I know the

good ones and the ones that get into mischief. I love them all.”

PART OF L-BF

Thydean has been a resident of the Littlefork community since 1968 when she moved to the area from Big Fork. Upon her arrival, she owned and operated the restaurant downtown which was called the Northwood Cafe at the time.

Thydean had the business for 10 years until medical reasons forced her to give it up. She then opened a daycare which she operated until 2001.

“I’ve been reading to the kids pretty much ever since,” she said.

Thydean listed the books she’s reading the respective grades and admits after reading the popular stories for 10 years, she can almost recite the

words by heart.

“It’s what the kids like, so I like it,” she said of reading “Junie B. Jones” and “Little House on the Prairie.”

Thydean rarely misses her weekly visits to the school and has only had to cancel a handful of times because of an illness or medical appointment.

“Coming here is a reason to get out of bed, so I don’t miss it too often,” she said.

In fact, a few years ago when Thydean had hip replacement surgery, she had to spend time in the Littlefork Medical Center. Instead of going without her “grandchildren” for too long, they came to her.

“They visited me in the care center so I could read to them,” she said. “They’re so special.”

And L-BF staff and administrators have mutual

feelings toward Thydean.

“I feel that grandma Mary is very much part of the L-BF family,” Bachmeier said. “Our school appreciates grandma Mary for donating her time and the service that she brings to our school. Many of our students talk about how great it is to have her read to them...Too often I think we as a society overlook what a person does in our community and take their generosity for granted, and I did not want that to happen with such a great lady giving back to our students.”

When asked what she enjoys most about coming to read to so many smiling faces week after week, Thydean didn’t even have to think about her answer.

“The hugs,” she said. “I love their hugs. I hope to be getting hugs for another 10 years.”

INTERNATIONAL FALLS  
FIGURE SKATING CLUB

PROUDLY PRESENTS.....

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND  
7:00 P.M.  
SUNDAY MARCH 23RD  
1:30 P.M.  
BRONCO ARENA

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT  
CITY DRUG  
SUPER ONE  
ESPRESSO LANE  
COUNTY MARKET

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BLOWOUT

We're making room for the NEW  
Spring Items that will be Arriving Soon!!

40% OFF  
Winter Boots,  
(Sorel, Kamik, Columbia, Ranger)  
Slippers &  
Select  
Outerwear

40-80% OFF

March  
Blowout  
SALE

Come in from the Cold  
and Check out the  
Hot Deals!!

\*Some exclusions apply.  
Excludes Mucks, Bogs,  
Under Armour, FXR &  
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