



Conservation Connection



A Minnesota Legislative Outdoor Newsletter: Created by Kim Scott and Alexandra David

**Sponsored by: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club,
Fish Lake Conservation Club, Izaak Walton League, MN Musky and Pike Alliance,
MN Sharptail Grouse Society, Outdoor News, Pheasants Forever, Sportsmen for the BWCA***

April 4, 2025

Important Dates:

- April 4, 2025 at 5:00 PM: first and second legislative deadlines: committees must act favorably on bills in the house of origin and act favorably on bills, or companions of bills, that met the first deadline in the other house
- April 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM: third legislative deadline: committees must act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills
- April 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM - April 21, 2025 at 12:00 PM: Legislative break for Easter and Passover
- April 23, 2025 at 7:00 PM: State of the State
- April 29, 2025: Special Election, Senate District 6
- May 9-10: 77th Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener in Crosslake
- May 19: Constitutional deadline for adjournment for the 2025 Legislative Session

Deadlines loom, budget decisions near: The first and second committee deadlines in the Minnesota Legislature were both at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 4. All legislation that is not a major appropriation and finance bill must be acted on by committees before this deadline: Crunch time has arrived at the Minnesota Capitol as the Legislature puts thousands of bills through a funnel, including budget requests and some proposals seeking a state lift for sports stadium renovations. It's all coming amid repeat warnings from politicians of a tight budget and a partisan layout that could make anything nonessential a tougher endeavor. Leaders of the House and Senate both released their budget frameworks in recent days. Lawmakers will spend the next few weeks filling in the details, but the competing plans share an intention of shaving projected spending by hundreds of millions of dollars in the next two years . . . Republican and DFL leaders in the House say they'll aim to shave about \$1.15 billion in costs over the next two years. Most of that would come by slowing inflationary spending growth in programs. Cuts would come in health and social service programs while education and housing would see modest increases. By comparison, the Senate DFL is seeking about \$750 million in overall reductions in the next two years. Both proposals would result in additional

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pullbacks down the road, which could be necessary to head off a deficit that could arise by 2029 without a change in course. [Read more.](#)

Gov. Tim Walz tells state agencies with federal funding to ‘assume it’s going to be cut’: Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz says he’s told state agencies to start planning as if all of their federal funding will be cut . . . While the amount of federal funding Minnesota receives varies each year, the money typically makes up more than a third of the state’s overall two-year budget. [Read more.](#)

House environment panel considers year-round bass fishing season: You might think a bill to allow a year-round fishing season for largemouth and smallmouth bass would be controversial. But all evidence from Tuesday’s House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee meeting indicates that [HF2824](#) enjoys wide support. It has sponsors from both sides of the aisle. The DNR supports it. Angling organizations support it. Committee members spoke in favor of it . . . “Bass are doing quite well in this state.” said Brad Parsons, DNR fisheries section manager. “We see this as an opportunity to provide more angling experience with no biological risk.” May and June are typical spawning times for bass, so Parsons said that adding several months outside of that time should have minimal impact on their population. The [season](#) for largemouth and smallmouth bass is now the same as for walleye and some other species, running from the Saturday two weeks prior to the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through the last Sunday in February . . . [Rep. Jim Nash](#) (R-Waconia) is the sponsor. He said the impetus is twofold: to encourage more people to develop a healthy outdoor hobby and to help an industry that has suffered recently. [Read more.](#)

Minnesota fishing enthusiasts bash technology that allows anglers to ‘sharp-shoot’: Minnesota muskie anglers are known for returning their catches to the water, but an alarming number of the fish are succumbing to the stress of being overhandled in boats or from barotrauma, a condition caused by rapid pressure changes when fish are brought to the surface from deep water. In Leech and other lakes, the giant fish have become particularly vulnerable from June 1 until July 4, when big females retreat to deep caverns to recuperate from spawning, Craven and Landreville said. Those trophy-sized fish used to be nearly undiscoverable in their deep haunts, but anglers with forward-facing sonar gear now “sharp-shoot” or “road-hunt” them by roaming the surface, eyes on their video screens. The technology is refined to the degree that anglers can identify which fish are worth casting, allowing them to drop baits directly in front of targets . . . During the forum, attendees suggested a variety of possible regulations or educational campaigns to ease the pressure on fish populations wrought by forward-facing sonar. [Read more](#) and [more.](#)

Minnesota’s continuous living cover crops have received a boost to further their advancements across the state: The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has awarded a total of \$431,637 to 10 new projects under the Developing Markets for Continuous Living Cover Grant. These grants help develop enterprises, supply chains, and markets for continuous living cover crops and cropping systems in the early stage of commercial development . . . Continuous living cover (CLC) refers to agricultural systems in which there are living plants and roots in the ground throughout the entire year . . . to enhance water and soil quality. [Read more.](#)

Data center backers and critics squared off Tuesday at the Legislature over water and energy use: An influential DFL state legislator wants tougher laws on data centers to regulate their water use and require a 65% carbon-free energy supply as the first crop of projects moves into Minnesota. ... The bill introduced by Rep. Patty Acomb, DFL-Minnetonka, the top Democrat on the House Energy Committee, would also impose fees on data centers to pay for conservation, and require public disclosure of electricity consumption, water withdrawals and the source of construction metals. [Read more.](#)

State lands may cost St. Louis County dearly: County officials warn that proposed cuts in aid for state-owned property would disproportionately impact local taxpayers. At present, the state holds more than 36% of land in St. Louis County — totaling about 1.5 million acres preserved for natural resource purposes, including state parks, wildlife management areas and properties managed under a variety of trusts. With that much property removed from the local property tax base, Minnesota provides offsetting aid or ‘payment in lieu of taxes’ — what policy wonks commonly call ‘PILT’ for short. In the face of a projected state budget shortfall, Walz has proposed a 34% reduction in PILT payments statewide next year. For many jurisdictions, the reduction will mean a modest cut in funding. Not so for St. Louis County, however, which stands to become the biggest financial loser statewide if the proposed program cuts become reality. [Read more.](#)

Attorney General Ellison forms Task Force on Future of Minnesota’s Water: Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison announced today that he is forming a new [Advisory Task Force on the Future of Minnesota’s Water](#). He is soliciting applications to serve on the Task Force through the State of Minnesota Open Appointments process. The deadline for applying is April 30, 2025. The Task Force will begin its work in June 2025. Members of the task force will study issues affecting the stewardship of Minnesota’s water resources, explore best practices from examples in practice in Minnesota and other states, and collaborate to develop a broad set of recommendations for policymakers and regulators, advocacy groups and business leaders, communities and individuals. [Read more.](#)

With Red Lake walleyes thriving, DNR sets hearty possession limit of five fish: Walleye anglers on Minnesota’s Upper Red Lake will be allowed to keep five fish this summer, two more than were allowed during the opening weeks of the open-water fishing season a year ago, state fisheries managers announced Monday. The new possession limit, effective May 10, allows anglers to keep five walleyes, but only one over 17 inches long. [Read more.](#)

Select DNR News releases

- [DNR seeks public comment on Lake Superior fisheries rule proposals:](#) The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is taking public comment on a proposal that would adjust the trout season dates for Lake Superior anglers and allow more harvest of Atlantic salmon.
- [DNR sets open water fishing regulations for Upper Red Lake:](#) Anglers fishing on Upper Red Lake during the 2025 open-water season that starts Saturday, May 10, will have a five-walleye possession

limit, with only one walleye over 17 inches allowed.

- [Construction underway on permanent water outlet for Canisteo Mine Pit in Itasca County](#): After pumping out more than 4.7 billion gallons of water from the Canisteo Mine Pit in Itasca County to manage the pit's water levels, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, in partnership with the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation, is building a permanent water outlet structure.

Last Week at the Legislature:

The Legislature did not meet on Monday due to the Legislative break for Eid.

On Tuesday at 12:30 PM, Senate [State and Local Government](#) discussed [S.F. 2132 \(Cwodzinski\)](#): Giant beaver designation as the state fossil. See testimony on the bills from: [Science Museum of Minnesota](#), [Paleontology Group](#) and [Minnesota Indian Affairs Council](#).

At 1:00 PM, House [Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy](#) heard the following bills: [HF647](#) (Schultz) - Mt. Simon-Hinckley aquifer water appropriations authorized ([House Research Summary](#)); [HF2824](#) (Nash) - Continuous open season for taking largemouth and smallmouth bass provided ([House Research Summary](#) and [MN-FISH](#) factsheet); [HF1249](#) (Jacob) - State land added to Carley State Park (this will be the vehicle for the annual Lands Bill. see: ([Lands Bill](#)) [Background Information](#) and [House Research Summary](#)); [HF623](#) (Swedzinski) - Shotgun zone for taking deer eliminated (see: [DE Amendment](#), [HF 623 House Research Summary](#), and testimony in opposition to the bill from [Olmsted County](#)).

At 1:00 PM, House [Energy Finance and Policy](#) heard: [HF2928](#) (Acomb) - Preapplication filings for large water appropriation projects required, permit application information for large water appropriation projects added, level of environmental review for data centers specified, data centers exempted from making financial contributions to an energy conservation and optimization plan, and other data center provisions modified ([House Research Summary](#) and [testimony](#) from: 100%, Vote Solar, Freshwater, Building Decarbonization Coalition, Minnesota Chamber Foundation, Fresh Energy, Environmental Groups Coalition, various constituents, [Minnesota Trout Unlimited](#), and [Minnkota Power Cooperative](#)); and [HF2297](#) (Myers) - Special license plate established for solar pollinator programs, and agrivoltaic solar sites made eligible for solar site management practices, (see: [testimony](#) from Cannon Valley Graziers, Audubon Upper Mississippi River, Environmental and Energy groups coalition, and Replace).

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) convened to hear the following bills: [S.F. 2735 \(Seeberger\)](#): Abandoned boats removal and disposal requirement provision ([Bill Summary](#) and [Letter of Support](#) from National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), the Marine Retailers of the Americas Association (MRAA), and the Watersports Industry Association (WSIA); [S.F. 1569 \(Kupec\)](#): Red River mediation

agreement appropriation ([Red River Basin Mediation Agreement Factsheet](#), [Completed Projects](#), and testimony from: [Red River Basin Commission](#), [Red River Retention Authority](#), [MN Association of SWCDs](#), [Red Lake Watershed District](#), [MN-NRCS](#), [The Nature-Conservancy](#), [Roseau River Watershed District](#), [Sand Hill River Watershed District](#), [West Polk SWCD](#), [White Earth Reservation](#), [Bois de Sioux Watershed District](#), [Buffalo Red River Watershed District Watersheds](#), [Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers](#), and [Minnesota Watersheds](#)); [S.F. 0946 \(Dahms\)](#): Floodplain management appropriation; [S.F. 2345 \(Hawj\)](#): Various natural resources provisions modifications ([Bill Summary](#)); [S.F. 2781 \(Hawj\)](#): Certain environmental review reporting requirements modifications ([EQB Mandatory Category Report- actsheet](#)); [S.F. 2782 \(Hawj\)](#): Environmental Quality Board obsolete provisions removal; and [S.F. 0514 \(Hoffman\)](#): Animal feedlots definition provision.

At 5:30 PM, House [Ways and Means](#) met to adopt the [House Budget Resolution](#) (see [House Budget Resolution Tracking](#) spreadsheet), and discussed [HF601](#) (Burkel) Depredation compensation payment funding provided, and money appropriated ([Bill Summary](#)).

At 1:00 PM, House [Agriculture Finance and Policy](#) discussed a number of bills, including: [HF2667](#) (Nelson): Definition for restricted pesticide handler added, and restricted pesticide license requirements for handlers modified ([Bill Summary](#)); [HF2683](#) (Anderson): Biofertilizer innovation and efficiency program established, rulemaking required, and money appropriated ([Bill Summary](#)); [HF2446](#) (Anderson): Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget established; policy and technical changes made to agriculture provisions; fees modified and established; civil penalties provided; money transferred; and money appropriated ([Bill Summary](#)); and [HF2916](#) (Smith): Southeast regional groundwater protection and soil health initiative funding provided, and money appropriated ([Bill Summary](#), [Southeast Regional Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative Factsheet](#), [Olmsted County Groundwater Protection Program Handout](#), and testimony to the committee from: [Minnesota Corn Growers Association](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), [MCEA](#), and various SWCDs: from Goodhue County SWCD, Mower SWCD, Rice SWCD, Root River SWCD, Wabasha County Soil & Water Conservation District.

On Thursday at 9:00 AM, Senate [Taxes](#) heard a number of bills, including: [S.F. 2108 \(Hauschild\)](#): Lakeshore land payment establishment modification. See [Bill Summary](#), [Fiscal Note](#), and testimony in opposition to the bill from [St. Louis County](#).

At 8:15 AM, [State Government Finance and Policy](#) heard, among other bills: [HF2744](#) (Jordan) St. Anthony Falls study due date extended, and [HF1389](#) (Kozlowski) State-owned land in the Cloquet Forestry Center transferred to the University of Minnesota, defeasance of outstanding debt on certain state bond financed ([House Research Summary](#)).

At 1:00 PM, House [Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy](#) discussed: [HF2419](#) (Tabke) Life jackets for children aboard watercraft required to have reflective material ([House Research Summary](#)); [HF2602](#) (Vang) Replacement seedlings appropriation modified and extended; [HF2620](#) (Finke) Emerald ash borer response and community tree-planting grants funding provided, and money appropriated (see: [written testimony](#) from The League of Minnesota Cities, Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee, Partnership on

Waste and Energy, and Metro Cities); [HF2621](#) (Finke) Community tree-planting grants funding provided, and money appropriated; [HF2861](#) (Curran) Groundwater management areas and comprehensive planning provided, and money appropriated; [HF820](#) (Jordan) Chippewa Bands authorized to establish open seasons for big game in accordance with 1854 treaty, and money appropriated. ([House Research Summary](#)); and [HF3007](#) (Fischer) Evaluation and permitting of projects requiring large water appropriations provided ([House Research Summary](#) and [written testimony](#)).

On Thursday at 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) heard: [S.F. 2077](#) (Hawj): Environment and natural resources appropriations and provisions modifications ([Bill Summary-Governors Budget](#), [MPCA Budget-recommendations](#)); [S.F. 2547](#) (Hawj): Environment and natural resources trust fund community grant program grants appropriation (see testimony in support from: [Environment groups coalition](#), [ENTRF coalition](#), and [Minnesota Environmental Partnership](#)); [S.F. 3015](#) (McEwen): Water availability atlas development appropriation and siting methodology; [S.F. 0593](#) (Hauschild): St. Louis County and City of Duluth all-terrain vehicle trails and studies appropriations; [S.F. 0594](#) (Hauschild): St. Louis County all-terrain vehicle trails appropriation (letters of support from: [ATV-MN](#), [MFZTA](#), [NRAJP](#), and [MN Public Lands Coalition-DNR data ATV mileage](#), [Chippewa Forest OHV Trail map](#), and [ARROWHEAD OHV Trail map](#)); [S.F. 2258](#) (Kunesh): Provisions to petition for preparation of environmental assessment worksheets modifications ([EQB Tribal petitions factsheet](#)); and [S.F. 1247](#) (Kunesh): Pesticide provisions modification to protect wild rice waters ([Bill Summary](#) and testimony in support of the bill from: [Coalition support letter](#)). More constituent testimony on the bill can be found on the committee website.

On Friday at 9:30 AM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) discussed: [S.F. 2833](#) (Johnson Stewart): Environmental permitting efficiency provisions modifications ([MPCA Permitting Factsheet](#) and testimony from: [MMUA](#), [MRES](#), and [CGMC](#)); and [S.F. 0570](#) (Hauschild): Wetland Conservation Act determinations efficiency modifications; appropriating money (see testimony from: [Fargo Chamber](#), [MEP](#), [CEEM](#), [GMG](#), [CURE](#), [MBTC](#), [Minnesota Pork](#), [RRWMB](#), [ACECMN](#), [MMPA](#), [MnCEE](#), and [Bill Summary](#)).

At 10:30 AM, Senate [Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development](#) heard, among other bills: [S.F. 2458](#) (Putnam): Department of Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget establishment. See: [Bill Summary](#) and testimony from [MDA](#).

Next Week at the Legislature:

On Monday at 8:30 AM, House [Rules and Administration](#) will discuss, among other bills: [S.F. 1464](#) (Pha): Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force establishment.

At 1:00 PM, House [Agriculture Finance and Policy](#) will begin the walk-through of Delete-All amendment to [HF2446](#) (Anderson, P.H.) Agriculture Budget Bill: [HF2446](#) (Anderson): Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget established; policy and technical changes made to agriculture provisions; fees modified and established; civil penalties provided; money transferred; and money appropriated.

On Tuesday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Finance](#) will discuss [S.F. 2865 \(Hawj\)](#): Omnibus Legacy Appropriations.

At 1:00 PM, House [Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy](#) will begin discussion on the omnibus Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy bill. An author's delete-all amendment and fiscal spreadsheet for the omnibus Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy bill ([HF2439](#)-Heintzeman) will be posted when it is available.

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) will hear: [S.F. 2077 \(Hawj\)](#): Environment and natural resources appropriations and provisions modifications (note: this is the Senate Omnibus Environment Appropriations bill. An updated DE and Spreadsheet will be posted prior to the hearing. A bill walkthrough and testimony will be taken up at this hearing); and [S.F. 1393 \(Mathews\)](#): Data center energy generation redundancy establishment.

On Wednesday at 1:00 PM, House [Agriculture Finance and Policy](#) will meet for Public Testimony and Markup on [HF2446](#) (Anderson, P.H.) Agriculture Budget Bill.

On Thursday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Finance](#) will hear discussion on [S.F. 2458 Putnam](#) Department of Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget establishment (the omnibus agriculture policy and finance bill.

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) will begin markup of the Senate Omnibus Environment Appropriations bill, [S.F. 2077 \(Hawj\)](#): Environment and natural resources appropriations and provisions modifications

Bills Introductions of Interest:

Environment and Natural Resources:

Bipartisan Legislation:

Pursell and Myers introduced: [H. F. 2983](#), A bill for an act relating to consumer safety; modifying requirements for products containing lead or cadmium; prohibiting sale of menstrual products containing arsenic or chemicals of high concern; requiring certain labeling and testing for menstrual products; requiring rulemaking; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 325E.3892, subdivisions 1, 2; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 325E. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Commerce Finance and Policy.

Senators Farnsworth, Hauschild, and Rarick introduced--[S.F. No. 3216](#): A bill for an act relating to environment; facilitating approval of site-specific modifications to sulfate water quality standards during

pendency of related rulemaking; providing for storage of reactive mine waste; providing for additional unemployment insurance benefits; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapters 93; 115; repealing Minnesota Rules, part 6132.2200. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

DFL Legislation:

Senator Hauschild introduced--[S.F. No. 3110](#): A bill for an act relating to energy; appropriating money for study on feedstock for next generation iron ore industry. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate.

Senator Kunesh introduced--[S.F. No. 3127](#): A bill for an act relating to legacy; appropriating money for river watch program. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Senator Hawj introduced--[S.F. No. 3143](#): A bill for an act relating to agriculture; transferring money to the agricultural research, education, extension, and technology transfer account. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

Senator Hawj introduced--[S.F. No. 3144](#): A bill for an act relating to natural resources; modifying and extending an appropriation for replacement seedlings; amending Laws 2022, chapter 95, article 3, section 6. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Pursell and Bierman introduced: [H. F. 2971](#). A bill for an act relating to health; appropriating money for nitrate private well mitigation. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Health Finance and Policy.

Fischer and Acomb introduced: [H. F. 3007](#). A bill for an act relating to natural resources; providing for evaluation and permitting of projects requiring large water appropriations; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 103G.265, by adding a subdivision; 103G.271, by adding a subdivision; 116D.04, by adding a subdivision. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Fischer introduced: [H. F. 3015](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; requiring certain permit applications to be submitted to affected Tribes; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 84.027, by adding a subdivision; 116.03, by adding a subdivision. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Falconer introduced: [H. F. 3025](#), A bill for an act relating to natural resources; establishing the nature as we age grant program; appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 84. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Senator Oumou Verbeten introduced--[S.F. No. 3258](#): A bill for an act relating to capital investment; appropriating money for the Mississippi River Learning Center in St. Paul; authorizing the sale and issuance of state bonds. Referred to the Committee on Capital Investment.

Republican Legislation:

Heintzeman introduced: [H. F. 2940](#), A bill for an act relating to natural resources; appropriating money for Mississippi Headwaters Board. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Bliss introduced: [H. F. 3040](#), A bill for an act relating to natural resources; requiring timely payment of timber refunds; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 90.201, by adding a subdivision. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Igo introduced: [H. F. 3050](#), A bill for an act relating to mining; modifying requirements for safe storage of reactive mine waste; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 93; repealing Minnesota Rules, part 6132.2200. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Game and Fish:

Bipartisan Legislation:

Senators Farnsworth and Gustafson introduced--[S.F. No. 3213](#): A bill for an act relating to arts and cultural heritage; appropriating money for a grant to Fishing with Vets. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Republican Legislation:

Senators Wesenberg, Green, and Bahr introduced--[S.F. No. 3195](#): A bill for an act relating to game and fish; lowering the minimum age to take big game from ten to eight years of age; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 97A.451, subdivision 4; 97A.475, subdivisions 2, 3. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

DFL Legislation:

Senator Kunesh introduced--[S.F. No. 3226](#): A bill for an act relating to agriculture; appropriating money for wolf-livestock conflict prevention grants. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development

Outdoor Recreation

Bipartisan Legislation:

Warwas; Igo; Skraba; Johnson, P.; Stephenson and Bliss introduced: [H. F. 2960](#), A bill for an act relating to arts and cultural heritage; appropriating money for a grant to Fishing with Vets. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Legacy Finance.