

SESSION WEEKLY

A NONPARTISAN PUBLICATION
MINNESOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES • PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICES
VOLUME 27, NUMBER 9 • April 9, 2010



Editor's note: The following Highlights are coverage of select bills heard in House committees and other House activities held March 25-April 8. Designations used in Highlight summaries: HF-House File; SF-Senate File; CH-Chapter; and *- the bill version considered by the House or the bill language signed by the governor.

CONSUMERS

Insurance for portable electronics

A House division laid over a bill that would regulate portable electronics insurance because of concerns it might harm mom-and-pop retailers.

Rep. Leon Lillie (DFL-North St. Paul) sponsors HF3251 that would cover insurance policies for cell phones, laptops and other portable electronics devices. The bill includes a number of protections for consumers who buy the policies.

Under the bill's provisions, retailers who sell portable electronics insurance would be required to obtain licensure from the Commerce Department, and pay a fee. Lillie said the bill is only meant to apply to large companies that can easily absorb the cost; however, some lawmakers are concerned it

would apply to small retailers as well.

Rep. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) suggested small retailers should be exempted from the fee or be required to pay a smaller amount. Lillie responded that it is not his intention for the bill to apply to "one-store operations," and said he will consider modifying the bill's language to exclude such businesses.

The House Energy Finance and Policy Division laid the bill over April 7, and Chairman Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) plans to bring it up for consideration again sometime next week.

The bill is intended to address ambiguities in the state's insurance laws. Lillie said the goal is to clarify that those who sell electronics insurance don't have to act as full-fledged insurance companies.

Peter Thrane, a lobbyist representing the insurance company Asurion, said the law is currently unclear as to whether retailers can even sell insurance on portable devices. He said the bill is supported by retailers and cell phone providers as well as the insurance industry.

The bill would require retailers to provide consumers with a comprehensive disclosure about the insurance policy. It would also require employees selling the insurance product to be trained in the terms and conditions of the insurance coverage.

A companion, SF2962, has been incorporated

into SF2510, which awaits action by the Senate Finance Committee. Sen. David Tomassoni (DFL-Chisholm) is the sponsor.

— N. BUSSE

OK to brew in basements

**Signed
by
the
governor**

Beverage producers can produce their products in basements, under a new law signed April 1 by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Sponsored by Rep. Mindy Greiling (DFL-Roseville) and Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville), the law allows the Department of Agriculture to issue permits to businesses producing certain types of beverages in basements or other subgrade areas. It is effective April 2, 2010.

Greiling said basements were previously automatically ruled out due to the "olden days" when basements were wet and had mildew problems. The department would like to look at basements on a case-by-case basis now, she said.

Seth Couenhoven, director of operations for Thuro Bread, told a House committee that he wanted to rent the basement of a building he owns to a company to make fermented tea, but was unable to do so. The basement is updated and approved for commercial packaging, but also needs to be approved for the bottling process, he said.

HF2918*/SF2632/CH209

— P. OSTBERG

EDUCATION

Land exchange resolution OK'd

**Signed
by
the
governor**

About 86,000 acres of Minnesota's 2.5 million-acre permanent school trust lands are within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and generate no income for the Permanent School Fund. They could soon be sold or traded to the federal government, as recommended by the state's Permanent School Fund Advisory Committee.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed a resolution April 1 affirming the state's intent to negotiate such an exchange with the United States Secretary of Agriculture.

Rep. Denise Dittrich (DFL-Champlin), who sponsors the resolution with Sen. Tom Saxhaug (DFL-Grand Rapids), said it sends a "nod to Congress" the state would approve a transaction.

The exchange, said Dittrich, could be



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Jeff Peterson, left, Commerce Department director of government relations, and Peter Thrane, center, representing Asurion, testify before the House Energy Finance and Policy Division April 7 in support of a bill that would regulate portable electronics insurance. Rep. Leon Lillie, right, sponsors the bill.