

It's about the Spending...

If there's one thing that State government is good at, it's creating taxes. Income taxes, gasoline taxes, property taxes, sales taxes ... the list goes on and on. They even figured out a way to tax taxes. Then there are fees to permit hunting, fishing, driving, and fees just to walk in the park. Creating inventive ways to fund itself is not a problem for State Government.

I have been recognized as Best Friend of the Taxpayer in 2013, 2014, and 2015 by the non-partisan Taxpayer's League of Minnesota because of my strong and unwavering support of the taxpayer. No legislator, in the 19 year history of the Taxpayer League's scorecard, as ever started with three perfect 100% scores. Until now.

When I read and study bills, my guiding principal is: Does this legislation provide at least an equal or greater benefit to the taxpayer than the financial cost it imposes? Are there ancillary benefits that compound into the future, or are the short term benefits worth the costs? Are there policy provisions that outweigh the cost implications?

I have voted for and against spending proposals. I have voted for and against tax bills. And I hope to continue to serve you in the Senate for four more years, living up to those principles. I will continue to analyze legislation through my principled approach and here are some areas of deep concern:

- Local Government Aid (LGA). Over the past four years, LGA in Minnesota has continued to grow. This is not a healthy path for the future of both the state and cities. In providing more and more spending money to cities, they not only become more dependent on the state, but also have little or no fiscal responsibility for their spending. While cities in my district are very good about not wasting LGA money on boondoggles, Minneapolis, blowing \$500,000 on a few water fountains, is a prime example of how not to be fiscally responsible with state aid like LGA.
- Education spending. There continues to be a growing disparity between suburban districts (Wayzata/Minnetonka) and outer/collar districts (Rockford/Delano) in funding. Slow progress has been made, but the State needs to understand that a one-size-fits-all formula may not provide fairness.
- Transportation. I'll go into more depth on this in another section, but one thing is for certain: The State needs to focus on 21st century solutions, and not by using 19th century methods. Light rail works well in some cities. It doesn't for Minnesota. The State needs to focus on eliminating bottlenecks, not creating new light rail lines that require perpetual subsidies and are extremely inflexible.
- Nursing homes and vulnerable adults. We have a duty to help those who cannot help themselves. I personally have two cousins with Downs Syndrome and know that we, as a society, have a responsibility to help them. But an able-bodied twenty-something year old male? No, we do not.

We can do better, we can spend more wisely, and we don't need more taxes to do it. And we need leadership that isn't afraid to look.