



# TARA MACK

## State Representative

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### Legislative Update

March 29, 2010

Hello from St. Paul!

1. GAMC
2. The Budget

#### GAMC

Last Wednesday the House passed the nation-leading reform I mentioned in my last update to provide coverage to recipients formerly reliant on GAMC. After upholding the Governor's veto we were able to return to the table to craft legislation that received broad bipartisan support.



GAMC's costs were growing at unsustainable rates, but this new plan saves taxpayers \$700 million while still providing coverage to the poorest Minnesotans who need it.

#### The Budget

Last week the House took its first step in balancing the state's budget deficit. Facing a \$5.8 billion structural deficit through 2012-13, this was the first opportunity we had to make real reforms to how the government does business. There is a lot of room to positively impact the role of government while still reducing its size.

Last Monday the House passed a bill intended to be the first of three parts to balance the current \$1 billion budget deficit. The bill covers approximately \$300 million worth of reductions but does not address HHS or K-12 Education (the areas the state spends 70 percent of general fund dollars). House leadership has rough proposals on how to address the additional \$700 million but have not yet put legislation forward.

Unfortunately, the majority passed this legislation without any type of framework for balancing the entire \$994 million deficit. This piecemeal approach is leading us to a false choice between raising taxes or cutting money to our schools. It doesn't need to be this way.

Nonetheless, my colleagues and I attempted to make this bill better by amending on real reforms. These included reducing the size of the state government workforce, creating a Sunset Commission and moving

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plans forward to restructure government. These would have improved Minnesota's short and long-term fiscal stability.

I voted against this bill because it fails to adopt the real reforms Minnesota needs. State government needs structural change not just one-time spending reductions. This bill does nothing to address the looming \$5.8 billion deficit next biennium. A number of my colleagues and I proposed long-term, cost-saving ideas, but the majority party used parliamentary procedure to block most of these from even being voted on. When tackling a problem as important as the budget all points of view need to be heard. Finally, the majority used taxpayer money to sue to reverse Governor Pawlenty's unallotments, yet they fail to account for the additional \$2.7 billion shortfall the lawsuit would create if successful. Their budget plan must address that additional deficit if they are confident enough in the suit's merit to use tax dollars.

As I have said since the beginning of session, balancing the budget is the most important task facing us. The situation calls for more than the band-aid of one-time spending reductions. We need surgery—dramatic structural changes—so we do not end up in this same position year after year.



Please continue to call and e-mail with your thoughts on the issues we face. You can also connect to me on Facebook.

Sincerely,

Tara Mack

For more information please visit my Web site:

[www.house.mn/37A](http://www.house.mn/37A)