

## **State Representative Peggy Scott**

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### **NEWS COLUMN EMAIL UPDATE: APRIL 20, 2009**

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Greetings from the Capitol,

The weather is getting nice, but we're still stuck inside here at the Capitol. With four weeks left in the Session will be spending a lot of time indoors.

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#### 1. Hang On To Your Wallets

It seems like the Democrats are working hard to take your money in a variety of new ways. From taxing things you download, to increasing the tax on cigarettes and alcohol even more, they want more (some might say all) of your money.

The Tax Committee currently is hearing bills that may be put into the omnibus tax bill. On the 15th, that's correct they even raises taxes on Tax Day, they debated a bill would increase the state tax on tobacco by another dollar. Between that and the federal tobacco tax increase that just went into effect you would end up paying \$3.66 in taxes on each pack of cigarettes.

There are a few different bills that would raise taxes on alcohol by outrageous amounts. One proposal would increase your cost on a case of beer by approximately \$4!

We should know more next week as to whether or not these tax increases will be included in the final bill. If the Democrats decide not to increase these taxes, it's certain they will increase other ones.

So hang on to your wallets, it will be a bumpy ride.

#### 2. Funding Legal Services For The Poor

Today the House passed legislation that is referred to by some as "Good Faith" legislation. It essentially changes the way lawsuits can be filed against businesses. It would make it much easier for people to file lawsuits, claims, and to get settlements on frivolous cases. In turn the lawyers who work on such cases would see great amounts of money from these cases. The effect of making such lawsuits even easier would be an increase of insurance premiums on consumers.

I offered an amendment to this legislation that would have capped the award that could be given to the lawyers at \$30,000. Any money awarded in excess of this amount

would have been given to programs to help fund legal services for those who cannot afford it. Unfortunately the amendment did not pass.

I do strongly oppose the bill, and I am confident that the Governor will veto this legislation if it makes it to his desk.

### 3. Same-Sex Benefits

While the state is facing a huge deficit the Democrats want to push their social agenda and soak the taxpayers even more.

The State Government Finance Committee added legislation to their omnibus bill to include taxpayer-financed health care benefits for the domestic partners of state employees. The language allows both same and opposite-sex "partners" to be included as a dependent.

The estimates are about \$12 million a year for same and opposite sex partners and about \$1.6 million a year if the provision is limited to homosexual partnerships. The Department also testified that by allowing opposite sex roommates to obtain coverage, the provision invites adverse selection and therefore drives up the cost per employee.

Last year the State Government Finance bill was vetoed because of this provision, among others. This language needs to be taken out, or it will see a similar fate. The cost to the taxpayers for this program is unacceptable, and it is simply a move to further a social agenda that most Minnesotans do not agree with.

### 4. Spring Cleaning

If you're like me you're probably trying to do some spring cleaning around the house. That may mean getting rid of some old computers, monitors, televisions, or any other number of things. If you find yourself wanting to get rid of such things you're in luck! On Saturday, April 25 in Andover and on Saturday, May 2 in Ham Lake you can get rid of your old appliances, tires, batteries, etc.

For more information, including locations and phone numbers to call for more information please visit: [http://www.co.anoka.mn.us/v2\\_dept/iwm/residential-recycling-garbage.aspx](http://www.co.anoka.mn.us/v2_dept/iwm/residential-recycling-garbage.aspx)

### 5. Fun Facts

I like to know facts on all sorts of different areas, and thought I would share some with you.

This week I was informed about the average sale prices for homes in our district.

In Andover the average sale price was \$237,127 in 2008. In 2009 that price is down just over 4% to \$226,961.

The average sale price in Ham Lake for 2008 was \$211,355. So far in 2009, with 9 homes sold, the average sale price is \$282,188. That's up over 30%.

With all of the talk about job creation with the stimulus package, I thought you might want to know these facts. In January, 2008, there were 9,004 Minnesotans employed in "Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction."

In February, 2008, the DFL promised that over 30,000 jobs would be created in road construction if the Legislature overrode the Governor's veto of the gas tax.

In March, 2009, there were 7,425 Minnesotans employed in "Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction."

So we have 21.9% fewer jobs in road construction than we did a year ago. Nice stimulus!

If you have any questions or concerns about any legislative issues please contact me! You can email me or call me at 651-296-4231.

Sincerely,  
Peggy