

# State Senator Amy Koch

## CAPITOL REPORT



**Asst Minority Leader** Email: [sen.amy.koch@senate.mn](mailto:sen.amy.koch@senate.mn) Capitol Phone: 651-296-5981

### Koch leads charge to allow state to consider nuclear energy



The Senate energy committee considered Sen. Amy Koch's plan that would, after a 16-year ban, allow nuclear power to be considered as an option for Minnesota's future growing energy needs. Deciding to repeal the prohibition is not a decision to construct a new nuclear power plant in Minnesota, but lifting the ban would allow our electricity providers and our utilities commission to consider all options.



Senator Koch gave testimony on lifting the state's nuclear ban.

State law currently prohibits the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission from approving a Certificate of Need for constructing a new nuclear power plant. The bill passed the Minnesota Senate with solid bipartisan support in 2009, and the issue of nuclear power has growing support from both major parties in Congress and the Obama administration.

Plans for new nuclear power plants are progressing in other states. The federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission currently is reviewing 12 applications to construct and operate 20 new nuclear units in 10 states. A new nuclear facility would create a substantial number of construction jobs and a significant number of positions of support to provide goods and services to that workforce, about 700 permanent jobs that pay about a third more than average. It would also contribute significant and reliable baseload power for future Minnesota energy needs.

According to a Gallup Poll, 62 percent of Americans support nuclear power.

Unfortunately, a surprise amendment was passed by the DFL majority members of the committee at the end of the hearing that gutted the bill of its intent.

### Legislature, Governor find GAMC fix

The General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) fix was passed by the Senate and will now go to the Governor's desk where a signature is expected. This is the compromise that was arrived at by both the House, Senate, and Governor's negotiators several weeks ago and had been stalled in the House.

Effective June 1, 2010, the plan creates a new hospital-based coordinated care delivery system in partnership with county agencies. Coordinating Care Organizations (CCO) will manage health care and provide medically necessary services for GAMC eligible residents. Capped block grants to

*continued*

#### *A Personal Note:*

*The Crow River reached major flood stage on Sunday afternoon at 20.3' - the third highest level in the last 50 years.*

*The Cities of Delano and Rockford along with neighboring communities and countless volunteers did a fantastic job in planning and preparing for the high waters. Reports are that while some basement flooding occurred and sandbagging and pumping were needed to prevent some first floor flooding - our communities weathered the high water without major loss or destruction.*

*You are all to be commended for your hard work and efforts.*

## **GOP seeks Attorney General legal action on federal health care mandates**

On behalf of constituents, Minnesota legislative Republicans called on the state's congressional delegation to reject the federal health care reform bill prior to its passage last week and sought protection from the state's attorney general to file a lawsuit against the unconstitutional measure and abuse of power by the federal government. A letter signed by all 68 Republican legislators (47 House & 21 Senate) requesting legal action against H.R. 3590 has been delivered to the office of Attorney General Lori Swanson. Governor Pawlenty has also requested the same action.

The mandate in the bill that would force U.S. residents to buy health insurance is unconstitutional, and the federal legislation imposes an unconstitutional



Sen. Amy Koch speaks at Capitol press conference about a proposed resolution speaking out against federal mandates to states and private citizens. Chief author Sen. Julianne Ortman looks on.

tax on individuals who do not comply with the mandate to buy health insurance. Other concerns with the legislation named in the resolution include the elimination of individuals right to choose private health care plans, a questionable funding mechanism for a new entitlement called the CLASS Act, and overall long-term funding and national deficit questions. Recent polling shows that a majority of Americans opposed the health care legislation, think it will hurt the economy, and will drive up health care costs.

## **Senate passes first budget bill**

The DFL-controlled Senate has passed a partial budget bill with some cost-cutting but no real reforms, and with public safety cuts that threaten every Minnesotan. Republicans offered Governor Pawlenty's complete budget, including job creation initiatives, as an alternative. It did not pass.

During the debate, Senate Republicans appealed to fellow senators to reconsider the proposed \$39.2 million in cuts - more than twice the Governor's requests - and supported amendments to reinstate funding to the fire safety fund, restore the state portion of funding for Sentencing to Service and lessen deep cuts to the state's courts, nursing homes and home care.

Throughout the process of cutting Minnesota's oversized budget and reprioritizing spending, the scare tactic of cutting police and firefighters was often held over the heads of taxpayer. Sadly, at the mid-way point of the legislative session, the DFL majority is revealing that it has no real budget plan and is pushing through this partial budget now in order to box-in the governor and the Legislature later with K-12 cuts or tax increases.

This piecemeal approach ignores a comprehensive solution to this year's billion-dollar deficit and, like the earlier passage of the \$1 billion bonding bill, show a complete lack of sensible priorities by the majority leadership.

## **Honored**



Senator Koch was honored for her support of arts education by the Perpich Center for Arts Education at their March 11 board meeting in the Capitol Rotunda. She is pictured here with Ojibwe Elder, George Earth of the White Earth Tribe who performed an inter-generational ceremony in the Rotunda with the Wakayzo Drummers.

## **GAMC** *continued*

CCOs will be funded with \$71 million from the state's General Fund. The agreement also includes a six month Uncompensated Care Pool (UCP) for hospitals that are not designated as CCOs.

The temporary UCP will be funded with \$20 million from the Health Care Access Fund. People eligible for the program continue to be low-income adults, ages 21-64, who have no dependent children, yet have the means available not to qualify for federally funded health care programs.

Senator Koch's amendment to the budget bill to repeal Green Acres to pre-2008 rates was defeated 32-34.