



State Representative

# Steve Drazkowski

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## *At the Capitol with Rep. Steve Drazkowski*

*By Steve Drazkowski*

*State Representative, District 28B*

The transportation funding stalemate in the State of Minnesota has apparently ended. On February 25, a nearly \$7 billion transportation tax increase proposal that had been vetoed by Governor Pawlenty was overridden by the state legislature.

The legislation includes several separate tax hikes, including an eight-and-a-half cent gas tax, an increase in license plate tab taxes for newly-purchased vehicles, and a potential half-cent sales tax increase in rural counties.

But worst of all, the Metro Area will receive the lion's share of the funding, with more than \$1 billion being used to fund commuter trains that most of you will never use. Under this proposal, state taxpayers will be forced to pay annual costs to operate the Hiawatha light rail and the Northstar commuter rail trains. They'll also pay for at least four more light rail trains in the metro area - and their annual multi-million dollar price tags.

For the rural family of four, they can expect to spend an extra \$500 each year for this privilege - or \$5,000 over the next decade.

Before the final vote, I received dozens of phone calls and emails from my constituents begging me to uphold the Governor's veto. I heard from a St. Charles woman who makes \$8,000 a year saying she will be forced to sell her car if the bill was approved, because she could no longer afford to drive to her job. I also heard from an elderly woman in my district who said she will be forced to sell her home due to the increases.

This correspondence reminded me once again that those who are most affected by regressive tax increases are those who cannot afford it - low-income Minnesotans.

There were other alternatives to this proposal. We could have re-prioritized transportation in our \$34.5 billion state budget, and taken some funds from another budget area and dedicated them to our roads and bridges. We could have issued bonds for some of the projects. We actually could have invited all sides to the table and worked out a deal that wasn't so oppressive to our poorest drivers.

Instead, the DFL presented us with an all-or-nothing, tax-heavy approach. They would not consider compromise and were fixated on raising taxes, which they inevitably did. It's a bad bill, and in a short amount of time rural Minnesotans will feel the impact in their wallets, but probably won't see it on their roadways.

So while the DFL and other special interests celebrate the largest tax increase in the modern history of Minnesota, I'm left to wonder how the low-income woman in St. Charles is going to make it into work .

Please let me know what you think. You can write me at 247 State Office Building, 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55155. You can call me toll free, at 1-888-683-3436 or e-mail me at: [rep.steve.drazkowski@house.mn](mailto:rep.steve.drazkowski@house.mn). To sign up for my email updates, please visit [www.house.mn/28B](http://www.house.mn/28B) and click on "Email Updates."