



State Representative

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At the Capitol with Rep. Steve Drazkowski

TWIN CITIES LIBERALS READY TO STICK IT TO RURAL MINNESOTA AGAIN

We often see a battle at the Legislature: The interests of rural Minnesota versus those of the Twin Cities. With Minneapolis liberals leading both the Minnesota House and the Senate, you can imagine who wins more often than not.

A good example of this is in K-12 education funding. Not long ago, Minneapolis' State Representative Joe Mullery sent a newsletter to his constituents bragging that he and other Minneapolis legislators "got more extra funding per pupil than any other school district," and that "Minneapolis Public Schools ended up with \$16 million more than they expected," and that "... the rest of the legislature is upset because Minneapolis gets 46 percent more per pupil than the state average."

Meanwhile, our district schools, which receive \$5,000 to \$6,000 per student, per year less in state education aid than Minneapolis schools, ended up with puny per pupil increases and are left to clamor for more.

We're about to see another rural vs. inner city battle at the Capitol, and it involves eliminating the budget deficit, as well as an important tool for creating jobs in rural Minnesota.

Because we are facing a \$935 million budget shortfall, the Legislature must find ways to eliminate this problem. Recently, the DFL chair of the Taxes committee - who lives in the metro area - proposed a taxes plan that would help achieve this goal.

Her bill would wipe out a very successful business tax exemption program that's being used to attract new businesses to our state. The Bloomington Democrat wants to eliminate the Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ) program, which to date has enticed more than 300 businesses to relocate or expand in Greater Minnesota. Several of these are located in southeastern Minnesota.

The bill also would remove tax breaks from those corporations that have business interests overseas. This may not seem like a big deal, until you realize that our agribusiness corporations - many of which are located in rural Minnesota - also fall into this category. The negative impacts these companies will face due to lost revenue will inevitably be dealt with by our area's farmers who do business with these companies - as well as by the workers which they employ.

Once again, rural Minnesota is the underdog at the State Capitol. Because The Twin Cities liberals can't control their spending (we now spend more than \$34 billion every two years on state government programs) they are now looking for ways to protect their own constituencies and pet projects, and the only way they can do that is to balance the budget on the backs of rural Minnesotans.

I'm convinced that Republicans and common-sense Democrats could solve this budget crisis by reducing spending growth in the areas that are either the most abused or the most wasteful - like welfare programs for example.

Rural lawmakers on both sides of the aisle realize that job creation is critical to the well being of Greater Minnesota, and would not propose the complete elimination of a program that has kept countless businesses from relocating in our neighboring states.

But as long as the Twin Cities liberals continue to be empowered by their caucus, there is no doubt that the policies that bash rural Minnesota will continue. They won again on the education issue last year. Let's hope common sense finally prevails on JOBZ.

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. To sign up for my email updates, please visit www.house.mn/28B and click on "Email Updates."