



State Representative

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At the Capitol with Rep. Steve Drazkowski

NEW INFO IN I-35W BRIDGE COLLAPSE

By Steve Drazkowski

State Representative, District 28B

What caused the I-35W bridge to collapse? Recently, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) began to shed some light on the topic.

As part of its preliminary findings, the NTSB suggests the collapse of the bridge may have originated with the failure of gusset plates, which are installed where bridge beams are joined together. THE NTSB says the plates were sized a half-inch too thin when the bridge was built in the 1960's, which may have led to the failure.

The NTSB chairman also said that at this point, there are no indications that Minnesota's upkeep of the bridge played any role in its collapse.

I don't know about you, but I'm already sick and tired of the political namecalling and fingerpointing that continues to take place regarding this bridge collapse. It undoubtedly was one of the worst catastrophes in the history of the state. Can't we just let a final report be issued before we try to assess blame or call for someone's head?

Now we're even hearing outlandish accusations that the final NTSB report won't be accurate, because the board might have a connection to our governor. Sadly, this tragic event is becoming a political witchhunt.

The federal investigation will continue over the next few months, and the gusset plate design may or may not be the ultimate reason for the failure of the bridge. I will keep you updated when new information becomes available.

On a brighter note, I had the pleasure of attending a meeting with ARC Southeastern Minnesota and Home and Community Options last week. Both of these organizations do a great job in helping people with disabilities succeed. Here, I was able to learn about the difficulties these organizations and families face, and how lawmakers can help.

One thing I found interesting is that those in attendance would like lawmakers to remove some government barriers. In doing so, many of our disabled neighbors would become more independent, and more families would be allowed to take care of them. In short, not only would

removing the barriers enhance the lives of those affected, but it would also be more cost-effective.

Minnesota government has a big problem determining what is a want and what is a need when it comes to state funding. There is no doubt that the services provided by ARC Southeastern Minnesota and Home and Community Options are needs – and this session I’ll be working to ensure they have the resources necessary to help our disabled community members continue to succeed.

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.”