

Senate

State of Minnesota

April 26, 2017

The Honorable Mark Dayton, Governor
State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Paul Gazelka, Majority Leader
Minnesota State Senate
3113 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Kurt Daudt, Speaker of the House
Minnesota House of Representatives
463 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Governor Dayton, Speaker Daudt, and Majority Leader Gazelka,

As new members of the Minnesota Senate, we are writing today to advocate for a fresh approach to end of session negotiations that involves transparency, public input and frankly, does not rely on last minute pressure to get our work done. We observed the last few budget negotiations from the outside and have not been impressed with the process or the results.

Having been elected on a firm commitment of getting our legislative work completed on time, we believe great strides have been made in accomplishing this goal. For example, the Senate and House passed an entire state budget earlier than any session in recent memory and bipartisan budget conference committees have been working diligently to arrive at compromises that will benefit all Minnesotans.

We thank Governor Dayton for acknowledging our early committee work in his letter to legislative leaders on March 13, 2017:

*"Thank you for setting deadlines that will require you to pass your omnibus budget bills out of committee by March 31, 2017. Those deadlines provide ample time to negotiate biennial budget bills to which we can all agree. **To that end, I request that we set joint conference committee targets no later than Friday, April 28, 2017.** That is two weeks after the Legislature returns from the spring recess and leaves more than three weeks to negotiate the details of the omnibus budget bills before your deadline to adjourn."*

However, over the past two weeks, we are concerned to see that the Dayton administration engage in outspoken criticism of our budget bills instead of demonstrating a willingness to work directly with policymakers. We are now hearing commissioners testify in conference committee they cannot negotiate directly on the Governor's behalf.

Delays, posturing and partisan attacks are the characteristics of failed budget negotiations of the past and must be rejected in 2017 if we truly claim to listen to the public. The early success of bipartisan bills like tax conformity, premium relief, Sunday sales, and reinsurance was accomplished with a new sense of openness and optimism and should be a model for the state budget - we hope that this plea can return all of us to that manner of governing.

As such, we encourage all parties to engage in serious negotiations immediately and have three-way targets available by Monday, May 1, so we can do the work we have been elected to do. As new members of the legislature, we feel a sense of urgency to work through our differences and simply get things done.

Working together – all of us – in an open, transparent process, we can advance policy for the common good. Our policy differences do not, and should not, disqualify us from cooperation; instead, those differences should drive a substantive, passionate discussion from which compromise can grow. After all, Minnesotans are counting on us.

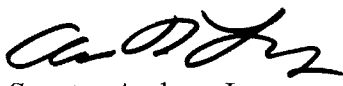
Respectfully,


Senator Mark Johnson
District 1


Senator Andrew Mathews
District 15

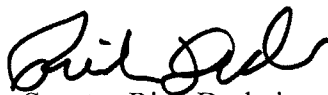

Senator John Jasinski
District 24


Senator Paul Utke
District 2


Senator Andrew Lang
District 17


Senator Mark Koran
District 32


Senator Justin Eichorn
District 5


Senator Rich Draheim
District 20


Senator Paul Anderson
District 44


Senator Jerry Relph
District 14


Senator Michael P. Goggin
District 21


Senator Scott Jensen
District 47