

## 2017 Legislative Session Review



*from the desk of*

**STATE SENATOR ANDREW**

# LANG

### **SENATOR LANG IS WORKING FOR OUR DISTRICT**

#### **Tax relief: Protecting your budget and helping our communities thrive**

After years of increasing taxes, you deserve a break. Our \$648 million tax bill will lower taxes for students, seniors, families, farmers, and others. Our tax relief package:

- ✓ Creates a tax credit for beginning farmers, equipping more individuals to be successful in their early years in farming – the lifeblood of our area's economy.
- ✓ Establishes a tax credit that will make it easier to pay off student loan debt.
- ✓ Brings tax relief to over 350,000 Minnesota seniors through an income tax exemption on Social Security benefits.
- ✓ Increases Minnesota's estate tax exemption to \$3 million, bringing it closer to the federal exemption.
- ✓ Brings farmers needed relief and makes it easier for schools to meet building needs through a tax credit on school building bonds – equal to a 40% offset for school building levies.
- ✓ Increases local government aid and county program aid, so communities can continue to offer essential services.
- ✓ Reduces the statewide property tax burden facing main street businesses by eliminating the inflator and exempting up to \$100,000 of the commercial/industrial market value.

#### **Transportation and public works: Advancing the region's infrastructure**

After years of no significant road and bridge bill, we passed a transportation budget that invests millions in roads and bridges across the state – without increasing taxes or fees. Our budget includes increased funding directly to cities and counties, allowing communities to address their own road and bridge needs. We secured funding for the Glacial Lakes Trail, along with a project near 100th Street SW in Appleton. We also guaranteed that Highway 212 from Chaska to Montevideo is eligible for Corridors of Commerce funding. Finally, by redirecting existing funds from auto-related sales taxes into an ongoing, dedicated transportation fund, those travelling our roads and bridges can do so in a safe and timely manner for years to come.



## Education: Prioritizing teachers and students

Part of what makes our communities so appealing is the opportunity for a great education for our kids. An additional \$1.3 billion in funding, including a 2% increase to the per-pupil general education formula in each of the next two years, will put more money directly in the classroom. Seeing the value of technical education, I authored legislation to bring more career training and trade education into our schools. Along with increased funding for areas such as special education, school readiness, and ag education, all Minnesota students will have the opportunity for an education that prepares them for the jobs of tomorrow.

## Our communities: A voice for Greater Minnesota

This year, I authored and passed legislation that works toward reopening the Appleton prison. By requiring the state to conduct a feasibility study of the prison when the need for additional bed space arises, we can begin the process of bringing jobs and dollars back into the Appleton community, while providing needed rehabilitation services that inmates are going without. From both an economic and humanitarian aspect, the prison's reopening is critical for the Appleton, Benson, and Montevideo areas.

I succeeded in securing funding for several important area investments, including \$7.5 million for a new Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services facility in Willmar, \$20 million to mitigate the closure of the Benson Power facility, and \$1.9 million for upgrades to Pioneer Public TV in Granite Falls. Finally, I worked with Friends of Fort Ridgely and the DNR to make sure the state does not lose the golf course located within the park – a valuable community asset.

I authored legislation to fund the Rural Finance Authority (RFA), which provides specialized, low-interest loans to farmers for a variety of reasons. I worked to pass legislation to increase agricultural education in our schools. I fought against the governor's mandate of "verification of need" before pesticide use, which would have cost farmers time and money.

Finally, I was successful in demanding changes to some of the unreasonable burdens placed on farmers and landowners by the state. We addressed the buffer strip mandate by establishing a grace period and allocating funds for implementation assistance and we passed a one-year moratorium on MnDOT's ditch mowing mandate.

## Investing in higher education

Recognizing the importance of higher education in our area, Willmar's Ridgewater College will see a \$2.1 million increase in funding over the next two years, along with supplemental funding that will allow them to expand programming or hire additional staff. With a better funded Minnesota State Grant Program, more students will be able to take advantage of financial aid.



## 2017 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Began process to reopen Appleton prison
- ✓ \$20 million to offset the impact of the Benson Power closure
- ✓ No increase in gas tax or license tab fees
- ✓ Invested in education with a 2% yearly increase to the per-pupil funding formula
- ✓ Created a first-in-the-nation tax credit for students with loans
- ✓ Demanded changes to the ditch mowing and buffer strip mandates



# A LETTER FROM SENATOR LANG



Dear Fellow Citizens,

In January, I began my first term as your state senator, and it has been my privilege to serve you. I am pleased to report that my first legislative session was one of the most productive in recent memory, passing both sound policy and a complete state budget that will keep west central Minnesota a great place to go to work, educate our children, and raise our families.

We bypassed the gridlock that has bottlenecked the legislature in recent years by passing a comprehensive budget in a bipartisan manner. We delivered the largest tax relief package in nearly two decades, the first serious investment in roads and bridges in nearly ten years, and an education budget that puts students first. This session represented true compromise – something you and I should expect from government.

Thank you for the honor of representing the people of Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Renville, and Swift counties. This legislative update is a nice way to reach out to the citizens of Senate District 17 without campaign rhetoric, giving you a more detailed sense of exactly what went on in Saint Paul over the past six months. My office is open throughout the year, so please contact me with your question or concerns. Working together, we can continue the good work being done at the Capitol.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Lang".



**STATE SENATOR ANDREW**  
**LANG**

*2017 Legislative Session Review*