

2017 Legislative Session Review



from the desk of

STATE SENATOR BILL WEBER



Agriculture: A voice for Greater Minnesota

Agriculture is the backbone of our region – that’s why I am fighting to stand up for our agricultural economy. I authored an aquaculture incentive program for companies like truShrimp, which will bring hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars of investment to our region. I demanded – and got – clarification on the governor’s “verification of need” language, bringing clarity to farmers on the uses of pesticides and ensuring its safe application. Finally, I carried legislation to bring additional agricultural education to our schools, preparing the next generation of ag producers.

Transportation: Advancing the region’s infrastructure

After years of legislative inaction, we passed a comprehensive transportation bill that invests millions in roads and bridges across the state. Our budget includes increased funding directly to cities and counties, allowing communities to address their own road and bridge needs. By redirecting existing funds from auto-related sales taxes into an ongoing, dedicated transportation fund, we ensure Minnesotans can get to work, school, and home in a safe and timely manner. Altogether, thousands of miles and hundreds of bridges across the state will be repaired or replaced under our budget.

Our communities: Pushing back against government overreach

This session, I pushed back on unnecessary, costly government bureaucracy, and stood up for needed advancements in our communities. We succeeded in demanding changes to the governor's buffer strip mandate, establishing a grace period and providing local assistance for implementation. We passed a one-year moratorium on MnDOT's ditch mowing mandate, lending a voice to farmers and landowners. Funding was finally secured to extend the Lewis and Clark Regional Water System to Worthington, ending over a decade of uncertainty and bringing reliable water to area residents. I carried legislation to prohibit the Pollution Control Agency from imposing costly, unproven regulations on cities with recently-constructed wastewater treatment infrastructure, preventing unnecessary cost from being passed onto taxpayers. Finally, I advocated for the local democracy bill for our rural electric cooperatives, ensuring the effective and economical resolution of customer complaints.



2017 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Brought additional revenue to local government aid and county program aid
- ✓ Passed the Ag2School tax credit for school construction bonds
- ✓ No increase in gas tax or license tab fees
- ✓ Secured funding for Lewis & Clark pipeline expansion to Worthington
- ✓ Demanded changes to the ditch mowing and buffer strip mandates
- ✓ Emphasized career and technical education, vocational training in our public schools

SENATOR WEBER IS WORKING FOR OUR DISTRICT

Tax relief: Protecting your budget

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

- ✓ Tax credits for beginning farmers will equip more individuals to be successful in their early years in farming – the lifeblood of our area's economy.
- ✓ A tax credit of up to \$500 will make it easier to pay off student loan debt.
- ✓ Over 350,000 Minnesota seniors will see tax relief through an income tax exemption on Social Security benefits.
- ✓ Minnesota's estate tax exemption is increased to \$3 million, bringing it closer to the federal exemption.
- ✓ A tax credit for farmers on school building bonds – a 40% offset for school building levies – will bring farmers needed relief and make it easier for schools to meet building needs.
- ✓ Legislation that I authored to bring a permanent increase to local government aid and county program aid, along with a county program aid formula change, will help ensure communities can continue to offer essential services.
- ✓ Our tax relief package reduces the statewide property tax burden facing main street businesses, eliminating the inflator and exempting up to \$100,000 of commercial/industrial market value.

Education: Prioritizing students, teachers, and schools

Part of what makes our communities so appealing is the opportunity for a great education. An additional \$1.3 billion in funding, including a 2% increase to the per-pupil 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 programs, and ag education, all Minnesota students will have the opportunity for an education that prepares them for the jobs of tomorrow. Finally two-year colleges like Minnesota West Community and Technical College will receive an increase in funding, as well as 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 more financial aid.

A LETTER FROM SENATOR WEBER



Dear Neighbor,

In January, I began my second term as your state senator – and it has been a privilege to serve. With my first legislative session now in the books, I am pleased to report it as being one of the most productive sessions in memory, bringing both sound policy and a complete state budget that will keep southwestern Minnesota a great place to live, work, go to school, and raise a family.

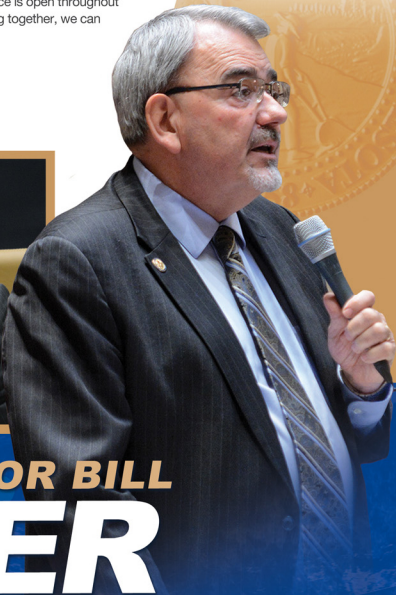
We made good on our commitment to begin reversing the gridlock that has plagued the legislature in recent years, passing a comprehensive budget in a bipartisan manner. This session, my focus was on passing a budget that prioritizes proven, needed programs and curbs wasteful government spending, relief and reform to the individual health insurance market, and protecting family budgets.

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 was representative of a true compromise – something you should come to expect from your government.

Thank you for the honor of representing the people of Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock counties. My office is open throughout the year, so please contact me with question or concerns. Working together, we can continue the good work being done at the Capitol.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Weber".



**STATE SENATOR BILL
WEBER**

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