Fischbach is a Twin Cities lobbyist, politician, and insider who is out-of-touch with the needs of rural and small town Minnesota. That’s why she voted for the buffer strip law to let the government seize land from farmers, and voted to take money out of Western Minnesota’s public schools. Fischbach even supports a plan that could close many of Western Minnesota’s hospitals.

July 2019: Fischbach Joined The Central Minnesota Builders Association As Government Affairs Director, Where She Worked Part Time To “Maintain A Working Relationship” With Politicians And Government Officials. “The Central Minnesota Builders Association announced Michelle Fischbach as the organization’s new government affairs director. Fischbach served as lieutenant governor in 2018, served as the president of the state Senate in 2017-18 and 2011-12, and as a state senator since 1996. Fischbach will be working part time at the CMBA office to maintain a working relationship with elected officials and agencies in the CMBA service territory, specifically the St. Cloud region, as well as with counterparts at the city, county, state and national levels on matters that affect the industry and CMBA members.” [St. Cloud Times, 7/28/19]

Fischbach Served As Lieutenant Governor. “Republican Lt. Gov. Michelle Fischbach resigned her state Senate seat Friday and took the oath of office as lieutenant governor in the DFL administration of Gov. Mark Dayton.” [Star Tribune, 5/25/18]

Fischbach Served In The Senate For 22 Years. “Former Lt. Gov. Michelle Fischbach officially filed to run for Congress, Tuesday. Fischbach will run in Minnesota’s Seventh Congressional District against longtime Democratic Representative Collin Peterson. Fischbach served for 22 years in the Senate and was the first woman to serve as Senate President in Minnesota. She will still need to win the August primary before November's general election.” [KSTP, 5/19/20]

Fischbach Voted For Requiring 50 Foot Buffers Around Certain Waterways In Minnesota. In April 2015, Fischbach voted for HF 846: “All public waters (rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands) require an average of a 50-foot buffer of perennial vegetation. All public drainage systems require a 16.5-foot buffer.” [HF 846, 4/30/15; Minnesota Corn Growers Association, 5/9/16]

No Money Was Included In The Bill To Compensate Landowners For Taking Cropland Out Of Production. “No new money is in the bill to pay landowners to take cropland out of production and plant buffers, but there is $33 million from the Clean Water Fund and the Outdoor Heritage Fund available for easements and other financial assistance to help landowners meet or exceed buffer requirements.” [Star Tribune, 6/13/15]

Opponents Of The Legislation Claimed It Forced Farmers To Give Up Productive Land Without Anything In Return. “But despite that level of participation, debate over the regulation is hardly settled. Opponents of the law, including some in the agriculture industry, say it forces farmers to give up productive land without anything in return, and they bristled at what they said was a lack of input in writing the regulation.” [Associated Press, 10/27/18]

Fischbach Supported HF 4385, A Republican Tax Bill. According to the Minnesota State Senate journal, Fischbach supported HF 4385. [Minnesota State Senate, Journal, 5/16/18]

Gov. Dayton Said The Bill Provided “Tax Giveaways To Multinational Corporations And The Wealthiest Minnesotans” While Not Providing Enough Money For Emergency School Aid. “Meanwhile, despite the State’s $329 million budget surplus, and hundreds of millions of dollars in tax giveaways to multinational corporations and the wealthiest Minnesotans, Republican Legislative Leaders have said there is not enough money to provide one-time Emergency School Aid for schoolchildren across Minnesota. In the final days of the 2018 Legislative Session, Governor Dayton is strongly urging Republican lawmakers to reconsider.” [Office of Mark Dayton, 5/17/18]
2006: Fischbach Opposed Senate A Tax Plan That Would Have Given School Districts An Extra $60 Million. “Two Central Minnesota Senate Democrats helped defeat a bill from their own party Wednesday that would have raised taxes on businesses to pay for more aid to school districts, cities and counties. On a vote of 32-35, the Senate rejected SF 3131, a supplemental tax bill that proponents said would deliver property tax relief to homeowners but that opponents warned would harm the state’s economic recovery.” [St. Cloud Times, 4/20/06]

See primary source document “20060420 St. Cloud Times”

The Bill Would Have Relieved Property Tax Levies, While Simultaneously Giving School Districts An Extra $60 Million. “The increases would have given school districts an extra $60 million beginning in 2008 to replace local property tax levy dollars.” [St. Cloud Times, 4/20/06]

2013: By A 46-18 Vote, The Senate Passed A Higher Education Budget Bill That Provided $1.2 Billion In Funding To Public Higher Education Systems In Minnesota, Including Funding For Tuition Freezes And Financial Aid. “Minnesota senators easily approved a higher education budget bill Wednesday 46-18, but debate made it clear they want to hold the public schools accountable for spending. The bill would give about $1.2 billion each to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities systems, about $80 million more each than current funding. ‘We’re covering the gamut of what it takes to provide the workforce of tomorrow,’ said Higher Education Chairwoman Sen. Terri Bonoff, DFL-Minnetonka. The plan aims to make college more affordable by directing funds toward tuition freezes and caps at public colleges and universities and allocating more funds for state financial aid.” [Duluth News Tribune, 4/18/13]

Fischbach Voted Against The Bill. “The following area lawmakers voted against the bill: Sens. Paul Gazelka, R-Brainerd; Carrie Ruud, R-Breezy Point; Michelle Fischbach, R-Paynesville; Scott Newman, R-Hutchinson; Julie Rosen, R-Fairmont; and Dave Thompson, R-Lakeville.” [Duluth News Tribune, 4/18/13]

2018: Fischbach And Her Running Mate Campaigned On Moving Away From The Affordable Care Act And Embracing A Free Market Health Care System. “Pawlenty and Fischbach also highlighted their support for stringent immigration enforcement, medical care price transparency, and moving Minnesota away from Affordable Care Act-related provisions toward a more private health insurance market. Pawlenty emphasized his support for repealing the state’s taxes on Social Security benefits, as Minnesota is one of only a few states to do so.” [Mankato Free Press, 6/4/18]

Repealing The Affordable Care Act Would Put 673 Rural Hospitals At Risk Of Closure. “The program is facing significant cuts or an outright repeal under President Donald Trump's proposed healthcare reform, putting 673 rural-based hospitals at risk of closing, according to a 2016 Chartis report. Of those, 263 have been deemed highly vulnerable.” [Forbes, 7/26/17]

Commonwealth Fund Analysis: The American Health Care Act Repeal Plan Would Result In A $2,423,000,000 Increase In Uncompensated Care At Rural Hospitals. Commonwealth Fund data showed that the American Health Care Act repeal plan would increase uncompensated care at rural hospitals by $2,423,000,000. [Commonwealth Fund, 6/23/17]

CBPP: Medicaid Expansion Was A “Critical Financial Lifeline” For Rural Hospitals. “The Medicaid expansion has also become a critical financial lifeline sustaining rural hospitals. […] The Medicaid expansion has been a lifeline for rural areas in other ways. The ACA coverage expansions, especially the Medicaid expansion, have substantially reduced hospital uncompensated care costs: uncompensated care costs as a share of hospital operating budgets fell by about half between 2013 and 2015 in expansion states.[8] Reductions in uncompensated care and increases in the share of patients covered by Medicaid have been especially important for rural hospitals. […]The House-passed bill would roll back this progress in coverage and harm rural providers by effectively ending the Medicaid expansion.” [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 5/16/17]
The Rollbacks Of Medicaid Expansion Could Jeopardize The Financial Solvency Of Rural Hospitals. “In addition to potentially reversing coverage gains, the rollback of the Medicaid expansion could seriously jeopardize the financial solvency of rural hospitals, many of which struggle financially and benefited from increases in the percentages of their patients with health insurance. While hospitals serving low-income patients saw financial improvements, no matter their location, after the ACA went into effect, rural hospitals saw larger gains in Medicaid revenues and operating margins than hospitals in more populous areas.” [Pacific Standard, 5/18/17]
ST. PAUL Two Central Minnesota Senate Democrats helped defeat a bill from their own party Wednesday that would have raised taxes on businesses to pay for more aid to school districts, cities and counties.

On a vote of 32-35, the Senate rejected SF 3131, a supplemental tax bill that proponents said would deliver property tax relief to homeowners but that opponents warned would harm the state's economic recovery.

Almost every senator from Central Minnesota voted against the bill, including DFLers Tarryl Clark of St. Cloud and Dallas Sams of Staples. Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson of Willmar supported the tax increase.

"We all share a desire to do some property tax relief," Clark said. "I would've liked to focus on one-time relief instead of a permanent change. Let's come back next year and think about what it is we want to fund and how to fund it."

Clark was one of six Democrats who joined all 29 Republicans to defeat the bill, which could come back in some form before the end of the session.

The outcome followed a three-hour closed-door DFL caucus to arrive at a uniform position on the bill. The DFL-led Senate has increased its majority in recent years and typically does not bring bills to a floor vote when the outcome is in doubt.

Tax changes

The tax bill written by Sen. Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, would have raised $160 million next year by taxing foreign operating corporations and another $44 million by lifting a cap on commercial and industrial property tax rates.

Pogemiller dropped a proposed income tax increase for the top earners in the state before Wednesday's debate and a proposed deed tax increase during the discussion.

Businesses have received more than their fair share of tax breaks since a 2001 tax policy shift, he said.

"The facts are, homeowners' property taxes have gone up 40 percent since 2001, while commercial and industrial property taxes have gone up 5.3 percent," he said.
A loophole that allows corporations to avoid taxation by basing themselves overseas means "higher taxes for every other business in Minnesota and every other consumer, because that's lost revenue," he said.

Proposed relief

The increases would have given school districts an extra $60 million beginning in 2008 to replace local property tax levy dollars.

It also would have meant an extra $60 million in one-time aid to counties to offset federal funding cuts, $78 million in one-time additional aid to cities and another $16 million in restored tax credit reimbursements to cities.

Also contained in the bill were $17 million worth of tax credits for beginning farmers' financial training, for dairy farmers' equipment investments, for military combat service and other areas.

An amendment from Sen. Michelle Fischbach, R-Paynesville, that would have given the Rocori school district levy authority to lease its administrative offices got into the bill, though Fischbach voted against its final passage.

"It increased taxes, particularly the (commercial and industrial) tax on businesses," she said. "We want to keep our people employed."

Next stop

Clark and Fischbach agreed that DFL leadership might attempt to pass a stripped-down version of the tax bill before the session ends.

It does not need to, however. The Legislature set tax policy last year to cover the current two-year budget cycle.

The Minnesota House is debating a tax bill that would provide direct property tax rebates to homeowners, but only if the Minnesota Supreme Court does not rule a tobacco surcharge the Legislature approved last year is unconstitutional.

What's next

The Senate could attempt to pass a modified version of the tax bill it rejected Wednesday, but one is not required in this nonbudget year. A floor vote on the House of Representatives' tax bill is expected next week.

On the Net

Follow SF 3131 throughout the session using the Legislature's bill-tracking Web site at: www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis.asp.

How they voted

On a vote of 32-35, Senate on Wednesday rejected a bill that raised taxes on businesses and increased state aid to school districts, cities and counties. A "yes" vote supported the bill. Here is how Central Minnesota voted:

es

Sen. Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar.

No

Sen. Tarryl Clark, DFL-St. Cloud.
Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel.

Sen. Michelle Fischbach, R-Paynesville.

Sen. Amy Koch, R-Buffalo.

Sen. Paul Koering, R-Fort Ripley.

Sen. Dallas Sams, DFL-Staples.

Minnesota senators easily approved a higher education budget bill Wednesday 46-18, but debate made it clear they want to hold the public schools accountable for spending.

The bill would give about $1.2 billion each to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities systems, about $80 million more each than current funding.

“We’re covering the gamut of what it takes to provide the workforce of tomorrow,” said Higher Education Chairwoman Sen. Terri Bonoff, DFL-Minnetonka.

The plan aims to make college more affordable by directing funds toward tuition freezes and caps at public colleges and universities and allocating more funds for state financial aid.

Lawmakers accepted amendments saying state money cannot be used for athletic coach buyouts or for administrative bonuses. While Bonoff said those limitations likely are already covered by law, lawmakers said it sends a message that the state wants spending funneled directly to education.

The budget proposal requires the university and MnSCU to meet several requirements, including increasing degrees conferred and graduation rates and developing a plan to trim administrative cost to get their full funding in the second year of the two-year budget. Bonoff said about $30 million is at risk there.

An amendment added Wednesday says MnSCU’s tuition cannot rise by more than 3 percent. The University of Minnesota has pledged to freeze undergraduate tuition with help from the state’s funding.

“This strong bipartisan vote demonstrates our commitment to each and every Minnesota student,” Bonoff said.

The following area lawmakers voted against the bill: Sens. Paul Gazelka, R-Brainerd; Carrie Ruud, R-Breezy Point; Michelle Fischbach, R-Paynesville; Scott Newman, R-Hutchinson; Julie Rosen, R-Fairmont; and Dave Thompson, R-Lakeville.

Sens. Matt Schmit, DFL-Red Wing, and Katie Sieben, DFL-Cottage Grove, were absent.

Stadium cut fails

Rep. Pat Garofalo said he wanted to cut $10 million from the state’s exposure if enough money doesn’t come in to fund its portion of the Vikings stadium construction project.
In the House Taxes Committee on Wednesday, the Farmington Republican offered an amendment to reduce the state’s contribution from $498 million to $488 million. It failed 13-11.

The Vikings would have been responsible for the $10 million.

“Don’t feel bad for them,” Garofalo said. “They are going to do just fine. … They are more than getting a fabulous deal.”

Electronic pulltabs, newly authorized to provide stadium funding, were to be in 2,500 bars by now. They are in only 250 and producing far less state revenue than planned, but Gov. Mark Dayton and others say they are confident that revenues will increase.

“I am of the opinion that it is much too early to throw in the towel on the Vikings decision,” said Rep. Tom Anzelc, DFL-Balsam Township.

A leading alternative to pulltab revenue is adding a tax on sports memorabilia sales. The idea drew opposition from the state’s professional sports teams and the University of Minnesota during an earlier House Taxes Committee meeting.

The proposal being discussed would place a 13 percent tax on licensed sports items for professional and large university items.

A university official said her employer does not think it is fair for students to help build a Vikings stadium.

On the University of Minnesota’s largest campus, in Minneapolis, the new 13 percent tax would be added to the existing sales tax that tops 7 percent.

Dayton has said he supports allowing a memorabilia tax to be used as a backup financing plan.

Wheelage tax added

A statewide wheelage tax option and change to the gasoline tax are among changes included in the Senate transportation chairman’s revised budget plan.

Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL-Minneapolis, tabled his earlier proposal at a meeting last week to look for other solutions. Both the House and Senate transportation budget plans had to be scaled back after Gov. Mark Dayton said he would not support an increased gas tax.

Dibble’s plan, like the House’s, would allow all Minnesota counties to charge up to $10 each year per vehicle to fund road and bridge projects, a fee vehicle owners would pay when renewing license tabs.

Twin Cities metropolitan area counties already can impose the tax, but the plans include the whole state.

Dibble’s new $5.78 billion proposal would reduce the gas tax by 6 cents but impose a wholesale tax of 5.5 percent to pay for roads projects. It also includes a metropolitan-area sales tax provision.

The House Transportation Finance Committee moved its bill forward Monday. It included the wheelage tax and optional sales tax. The proposal also would allow counties to impose a half-cent sales tax for transportation projects without requiring residents to vote on it.

Staffing levels studied
The Minnesota House moved forward Wednesday on a plan supported by hospital administration and nurse organizations dealing with staffing levels and patient care.

The bill lawmakers passed 73-58 would create a study of nurse staffing levels and patient outcomes and require Minnesota hospitals to make their staffing plans public.

Bill author Rep. Joe Atkins, DFL-Inver Grove Heights, said the bill is a compromise and has support from the Minnesota Hospital Association and Minnesota Nurses Association.

Originally the proposal was to require certain staffing levels at hospitals. But that was met with opposition from administrators and others who said it would add to labor costs and would not necessarily translate to better care. The bill was changed to the study and staffing information.

Atkins said the study will provide reliable and credible information to see if there is a staffing problem and if it relates to patient care.

The Minnesota Department of Health would convene a working group of industry experts to produce the study, which would be available in 2015.

A number of Republicans said providing and updating the staffing plan information could be an extra burden on hospitals, especially small and rural ones.

“This is an extra mandate at the local level that is unnecessary,” said Rep. Dan Fabian, R-Roseau.

Atkins argued that hospitals already have most or all of the information readily available, but the bill would require it to be compiled in one place.

Some also worried that the study was a way to eventually impose required staffing ratios on hospitals.

“I don’t think what’s going on in this bill is any slam against the policies of the hospitals,” said Rep. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka.

The Senate version of the bill is not significantly different, and Atkins said he hopes the two bodies can come to an agreement on the final language.

Bomb dog brought in

A bomb-sniffing dog was brought to the Capitol this week in response to Monday’s bombings in Boston.

“Out of an abundance of caution, a K-9 was in the Capitol following the Boston bombing for an additional sweep,” said Bruce Gordon, a Public Safety Department spokesman.

He said dog patrols have been used at the Capitol, but many legislative staff members said they have not seen them before.

“There were no known credible threats in Minnesota related to the Boston bombings,” Gordon said.