

The Minnesota Star Tribune

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H: 88° L: 63° | WARM AND WINDY

One week to go and still no budget



Fights over taxes, DFL policy rollbacks stall progress; no bonding bill, either.

By RYAN FAIRCLOTH and ALLISON KITE
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Minnesota legislators are heading into the final week of their session without an agreement on how much to spend over the next two years. That spending framework is critical for the tied House and DFL-controlled Senate to begin reconciling differences and merging their respective budget

bills. Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders have blown past their self-imposed May 2 deadline to reach an agreement, even after 10 straight days of negotiations that sometimes stretch late into the evening. Several major sticking points have yet to be resolved before the Legislature’s adjournment deadline next Monday. Each day that passes without a deal brings lawmakers closer to needing a special session to finish the work for the first time in four years. Here’s a look at where things stand heading into the final week of session: The top order of business is the state budget. Lawmakers must pass a two-year budget before July 1 to avoid a government shutdown. Minnesota faces a bleak outlook mostly because of the skyrocketing costs of long-term

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DEADLINE LOOMS
House DFL Leader Melissa Hortman and Rep. Zack Stephenson, DFL-Coon Rapids, head to budget talks Thursday at the Capitol. Lawmakers must agree on a two-year budget by next Monday when the Legislature is scheduled to adjourn or go into a special session.

Photo by RENÉE JONES SCHNEIDER
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Trump poised to accept luxury jet from Qatar

It would initially replace Air Force One and later go to president’s library.

By MAGGIE HABERMAN, ERIC SCHMITT and GLENN THRUSH
The New York Times

The Trump administration plans to accept a luxury Boeing 747-8 plane as a donation from the Qatari royal family that will be upgraded to serve as Air Force One, which would make it one of the biggest foreign gifts ever received by the U.S. government, several U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter said. The plane would then be donated to President Donald Trump’s presidential library when he leaves office, two senior officials said. Such a gift raises the possibility that Trump would have use of the plane even after his presidency ends. While a Qatari official described the proposal as still under discussion and the White House said that gifts it accepted would be done in full compliance with the law, Democratic lawmakers and good-govern-

ment groups expressed outrage over the substantial ethical issues the plan presented. They cited the intersection of Trump’s official duties with his business interests in the Middle East, the immense value of the lavishly appointed plane and the assumption that Trump would have use of it after leaving office. Sold new, a commercial Boeing 747-8 costs in the range of \$400 million. “Even in a presidency defined by grift, this move is shocking,” said Robert Weissman, a co-president of Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy organization. “It makes clear that U.S. foreign policy under Donald Trump is up for sale.” Trump’s own private plane, known as “Trump Force One,” is an older 757 jet that first flew in the early 1990s and was then used by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. Trump bought it in 2011. The Qatari jet, if Trump continued flying it after leaving office, would give him a substantially newer plane for his own use. ABC News reported Sunday morning that the gift of the plane was to be announced in

SEE TRUMP ON A4 »

Great unknown: Analyzing Trump’s tendency to be caught unaware. **A4**

Peer pressure aims to keep kids in class

Potential absentee students get pep talks to stay in school.

By ANTHONY LONETREE
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Sophomore Juan Munguia makes a point of stopping to talk to kids he sees lingering in hallways between classes at Roosevelt High School in south Minneapolis. He offers a pep talk of sorts, a one-to-one connection to say: Here is someone who believes in you, who knows you can do your best and can get your grades up if you’re in that room. And it is precisely the sort of advice Munguia needed when he was struggling to stay in school. “Getting their trust is a big thing,” he said of his interactions with his fellow students. Positive peer pressure is one way schools are trying to boost the dismal attendance numbers of recent years, and in turn lift

achievement and graduation rates. There’s been much talk and a lot of ideas, and they’ve been in play since the start of the 2024-25 school year. The new year began with the state’s annual release of student test scores showing that 1 in 4 students were chronically absent statewide – a 5% improvement but still a major issue. Lawmakers were meeting on the subject. Districts like Minneapolis began to pilot ways to keep kids engaged. The 12 school systems venturing into that work represented a mix of urban, suburban and rural, and it has been hoped that their approaches – funded a year ago through a special legislative appropriation – could be replicated elsewhere. It is a three-year initiative, and next year, Minneapolis plans to take it up a notch. But for now, the district is showcasing the work of its students – they were part of a panel

SEE ATTENDANCE ON A5 »

Cities reject proposed rules for new housing

Advocates say reforms could ease shortage.

By GRETA KAUL
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Minnesota cities do not want state legislators to tell them how much housing to approve, what it should look like or how many parking spots to require per apartment. They made that much clear last week at a Senate committee

meeting that spelled the likely end of “Yes to Homes,” a bipartisan legislative package that advocates said would address Minnesota’s housing shortage by removing barriers to building homes. “Likely they’re dead for the year,” Sen. Lindsey Port, DFL-Burnsville, who authored one of the main bills, said last Monday. Nobody’s disputing the shortage of housing. But while Port and colleagues charac-

terized their bills as a state-sized solution to a state-sized problem, opponents, including advocacy groups and cities themselves, called them a one-size-fits-all approach that removes local authority to decide what and where to build. “We feel as though the package of bills was a sledgehammer when a scalpel will do,” West St. Paul City Manager Nate Burkett said in an interview last Monday, reiterating the position

his city took in a letter opposing “Yes to Homes” legislation. Port and a coalition of Republican and DFL lawmakers this year introduced a package of bills that would have made sweeping changes to city zoning and housing regulations across the state in an attempt to remove what they characterize as barriers preventing housing construction. It’s the second attempt for a “missing middle” package. A

SEE HOUSING ON A5 »

NO MORE BANKING ON PROTECTING WETLANDS

Story by CASSANDRA STEPHENSON and DELANEY DRYFOOS • Photo by KAREN PULFER FOCHT
Tennessee Lookout and The Lens NOLA

Fourth-generation Middle Tennessee cattle farmer Cole Liggett lined up with scientists and environmental advocates in March to urge Tennessee lawmakers not to gut the state’s historically strong protections for wetlands. Wetlands protection has been good business for Liggett. In addition to raising cattle, he’s a manager at Headwaters Reserve, a firm that developers pay to preserve and restore wetlands and streams so they can destroy them elsewhere, called mitigation banking. If lawmakers follow through on a plan to deregulate an estimated 80% of the state’s isolated wetlands, that will upend the industry in Tennessee and drive up prices for developers still required to pay for mitigation, Liggett testified.

Liggett works in a growing industry that operates more than 2,500 mitigation banks nationwide, earning an estimated \$3.5 billion in revenue in 2019, according to a 2023 study funded by the Ecological Restoration Business Association. The industry is built on demand spurred by the 1972 U.S. Clean Water Act, which requires developers to offset damage to wetlands by building or restoring wetlands nearby. But recent federal actions to reduce the scope of that law are pushing states to choose how strictly they will regulate wetlands. The consequences of those decisions not only threaten further degradation of land, water

SEE WETLANDS ON A10 »



PAYING FOR PROTECTION

Paul Stoddard of the environmental consulting firm EnSafe visits the West Tennessee Wetlands Mitigation Bank site, where more than 50,000 trees were planted to restore part of this 250-acre area.

TOP NEWS Hamas says the last living American hostage in Gaza will be released. A3	NATION & WORLD Leo’s first noon blessing nods to Catholic Church’s conservative and progressive sides. A3	STATE & REGION The U is helping veterans who served as combat medics become doctors. A6	SPORTS DaShawn Keirse Jr. is the unlikely hero as Twins’ winning streak hits eight games. C1	BUSINESS A Como zookeeper describes the joy, hard work and heartache of caring for primates. D1	VARIETY Want to meet people but feel intimidated? A board game night might be in the cards. E1
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HAVE YOU HEARD?
Dozens had been evacuated Sunday afternoon in northeast Minnesota’s St. Louis County as a wildfire spread to 160 acres. **A7**

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