

K-12 EDUCATION REFORM (CONTINUED)

- ▶ Require grade-level reading by the time students leave third grade: Children learn to read through third grade. After that, they read to learn. Students must be literate to succeed in all subjects. We must:
 - Create effective early education programs.
 - Track students' reading progress beginning in kindergarten and include the parents in discussions about the achievement levels of their children.
 - Require teachers to pass a basic reading skills test before entering the classroom.
- ▶ Increase high school graduation requirements: High school graduates must be prepared to enter postsecondary education or the workforce. This is not the case in Minnesota today. In 2009, 75 percent of students graduated in four years. More than one-third of students entering college required remedial courses. We must:
 - Increase the rigor of graduation standards.
 - Reinstate the math GRAD requirement, or develop end-of-course exams that include a cut score that students must achieve.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND PERMITTING REFORM

Businesses of all types and sizes continue to be frustrated by the cost and time to apply for and receive approval for a variety of permits. We need sensible regulations to foster economic development while still protecting health and environmental concerns. Companies need certainty in the regulatory process. The Minnesota Chamber made initial headway in 2010 in streamlining the environmental review and permitting process at some state agencies. We are poised to take the next steps, including implementation of e-licensing for applications to reduce administrative costs.

Legislative initiatives:

- ▶ Move the appeal of an environmental review decision from district court directly to the Court of Appeals.
- ▶ Establish a 150-day goal for issuing permits at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Department of Natural Resources. A similar guideline is in place at the Department of Agriculture.
- ▶ Allow the proposer of a project – rather than the responsible governmental unit – to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The government unit still would review and approve the EIS.

ENERGY

Minnesota is approaching a dangerous crossroads in its ability to provide a reliable supply of electricity at competitive prices. Recent legislation increases conservation targets and mandates more investments in renewable energy. Even if these efforts are successful, we still need additional base-load electricity for businesses and households alike.

Legislative initiative:

- ▶ Eliminate the ban on consideration of additional nuclear power: Minnesota is among a minority of states in the country that has adopted a state policy banning new nuclear energy.

TRANSPORTATION

Minnesota demands a diverse and effective transportation system for timely and efficient movement of people and goods. The Minnesota Chamber supports investment in the state's transportation infrastructure, and we must ensure that we are getting the greatest value for the money. Because highway funds are constitutionally dedicated, the Legislature executes less oversight in terms of how the money is spent.

Legislative initiative:

- ▶ Increase accountability in road, bridge and transit funding: We will continue to pursue budget processes and project delivery methods that increase the efficiency of available dollars and create more accountability to taxpayers. The planning process could be strengthened by requiring more "sunshine" on the budgeting process.