

## Blake, Cumah (GOV)

**From:** rep.paul.thissen@  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 23, 2015 12:38 PM  
**To:** Announcements from Representative Paul Thissen  
**Subject:** End of Session Wrap-Up

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### Rep. Paul Thissen (61B) - Legislative Update



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Dear Neighbors,

Last week the legislature wrapped up a one-day special session to agree to several budget bills that were not addressed during the regular session. Here are some of the highlights, lowlights, and information about the work that remains for the 2016 session:


#### Transparency Leads to Better Public Policy

I am sure you were as frustrated as I was that the legislature could not get its work done on time. There was absolutely no reason with a nearly \$2 billion surplus and a growing economy that we should not have gotten our work done with time to spare. When I was Speaker of the House, I was proud that the legislature always finished on time, with a soundly balanced budget, and with a long record of accomplishment for Minnesotans. Unfortunately, Special Sessions are becoming too common at the State Capitol in recent years.

But the end of this session – and the weeks leading up to the Special Session – were worse than usual in the lack of transparency and public input. Throughout the process, I urged that the public have more information and input in the process. I will continue to do so – and work with my colleagues to ensure that the public is more involved in the future. More sunlight leads to better outcomes for Minnesotans.

#### News Items

[House DFL Leader Paul Thissen: Republicans were willing to shut down government over refusal to invest in kids](#) - (Posted: Jun 1 2015 4:04PM)  
[House DFL Leader Paul Thissen: Legislature will miss Representative Winkler's impatience for injustice](#) - (Posted: May 21 2015 10:23AM)  
[House Republicans failed to finish the job for hardworking Minnesotans](#) - (Posted: May 20 2015 10:35AM)

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\* Prefers interim mail at this address.

### **Investments in E-12 Education**

I am so thankful for Governor Dayton. Due to his leadership, the final education budget passed by the legislature made important investments in Minnesota's future. Recall that the initial budget passed by the House Republican Majority provided just about 1/2% increase for Minnesota schools, which would have forced teacher layoffs and larger classrooms across the state. Governor Dayton was successful in getting the House Republicans to agree to a \$525 million education investment that adequately funds classrooms and provides new opportunities to our youngest learners.

I am particularly pleased we succeeded in funding the Northside Achievement Zone and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhoods. These programs have a track record of closing the opportunity gap. Visit [this site](#) for more information.

But there is still work to do to make sure all Minnesota children – kids from lower income and middle class families alike – can attend a high quality preschool program if their parents decide that is the best option for their family. I remain hopeful that 2016 will be the year we step up as a state to make that a reality.

### **Preventing harmful steps backwards**

I am also pleased that Governor Dayton was able to temper some of the more radical ideas that emerged from the Republican legislature this year. In the end, proposals to eliminate health care for 100,000 working Minnesotans, to roll back important environmental and energy policies, and to eliminate essential consumer protections did not become law (although some certainly did). Indeed, every bill that Governor Dayton vetoed improved by the time the Special Session adjourned.

### **Missed Opportunities to move Minnesota forward**

Perhaps the worst thing about the 2015 session was the many missed opportunities to take strides forward for Minnesota's future. The session began with a \$ 2 billion surplus and lot of optimism. In the end, many of the big priorities of the session were not addressed.

Fixing our state's roads and bridges was a top priority

for many, but a “lights on” transportation bill was all that was accomplished because the legislature could not agree on a way to fund our needed fixes to roads and bridges. We should all be frustrated by the fact that the Number 1 victory Republicans have claimed this year is stopping a transportation bill. Just saying “No” will not build a single new road or bridge in this state. Republicans also blocked efforts to address rail safety – a critical public safety issue for the 326,000 Minnesotans that live within ½ mile from an oil train route.

Tuition at our public colleges and universities are expected to go up next year due to unnecessary underfunding in the higher education budget. The University of Minnesota and our four year state colleges and universities will raise tuition by over 3% on average. The legislature also failed to approve any middle-class tax cuts this session. And Republicans blocked the Working Parents Act, which would provide increased workplace protections and flexibility for hardworking Minnesotans such as paid family leave and earned sick leave.

Finally, the House Democrats made repeated efforts to reform our campaign finance laws bring more openness and to dampen the extreme control that rich corporate special interests have on our political process. Republican leadership repeatedly shut those efforts down. If democracy is a marketplace of ideas, the rich now have a monopoly on that marketplace because they control who and what gets heard. I will continue to fight to make sure regular folk’s voices have at least a fighting chance of getting heard.

### **Contacting me**

The 2016 legislative session begins next March. In the meantime, please contact me at your convenience with your input and ideas at [REDACTED] or [rep.paul.thissen@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:rep.paul.thissen@[REDACTED])

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