

The Free Press

50¢

Thursday,
November 30, 2006

www.mankatofreepress.com

36 pages
Volume 123, No. 236

Local lawmakers cautious about projected surplus

Morrow: 'I don't think this means a spending free-for-all'

By Mark Fischenich
Free Press Staff Writer

After five years of state budget forecasts that ranged from gut-wrenching deficits to tiny surpluses, newly elected lawmakers got a big dose of good news from the forecast released Wednesday.

"The word spread around the building pretty quickly," said Rep.-elect Terry Morrow, DFL-St. Peter, who was with other new members of the House and Senate for an orientation and retreat. "... There were a lot of smiling faces up here."

And there were a lot of

organizations immediately sending out press releases saying essentially the same thing: Don't forget about us when you decide what to do with all that extra money. Advocates for government employees, children, schools and business all had ideas about where at

least some of the money

should be directed. Morrow said the surplus is likely to benefit some of the key pieces of the state budget that were consistently a focus of candidates statewide in the fall campaign. They include spending for education, health

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Pawlenty calls for property tax relief

The Associated Press

ST. PAUL — Complaints about rising property taxes rang out throughout the election season. Word that the state is on course for a \$2.2 billion budget surplus puts lawmakers in a position

to do something about it. Gov. Tim Pawlenty and legislators from both parties issued calls Wednesday for property tax relief with some of the surplus expected to come in over the next

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The Associated Press

President Bush (left) walks in with King Abdullah II of Jordan (obscured by door) past a palace guard at the Radhadan Palace Wednesday in Amman, Jordan. Bush's summit with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was put off Wednesday after public disclosure of U.S. doubts about his capacity to control sectarian warfare.

MINNESOTA STATE'S COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE



Pat Christman

As director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Stewart Ross gets the credit for the success of the program. Minnesota State University faculty say that they have become better instructors as a result of his work.

Teaching *the* teachers

Program helps MSU professors better engage their students

By Robb Murray
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Steve Smith came to Minnesota State University to teach lighting. And he's good at it. Knows his craft inside and out. And he's confident with what he does.

"I was hired because I'm a good lighting designer," he said. See? But ... "My training in college was not how to be an effective teacher."

So why, then, are his classes filling up faster than ever? Why are his students scoring higher on exams? Why, on most days, are his classes full, even though he doesn't require his students to be there?

His answer is a two-thumbs-up, holy-cow endorsement of what is no longer the best kept secret at MSU: the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Stewart Ross, director.

"I love waving the flag for Stewart Ross because he really makes a difference for the university and the quality of education our students receive," Smith says.

Ross has been running the center for about five years. And since its inception, several hundred faculty members have gone through one of two faculty certificate programs. Simply put, they're taught how to be better teachers.

Many come away inspired and ready to make a difference. Others have revamped courses and added more opportunities for student engagement. They're throwing in some flash with multi-media, Powerpoint and online components. But most importantly, they're getting a reminder that teaching is a lot more than just standing up in front of a room and delivering a lecture.

Can that be right?

Ross says between 75 and 80 percent of all faculty have never had a class on how to teach. It's true.

Instead, the general thought in higher education is that if you've done the work to earn the Ph.D. in your field, you're qualified to teach in your field.

Sadly, for many students, that rea-

soning equates to hours of listening to an instructor who may have encyclopedic knowledge of American history, but puts people to sleep during lectures.

Several years ago, Ross came to a crossroads in his career. After being director of bands at MSU for 22 years, he began to suffer some hearing loss. ("That always gets some laughs," he says, "but it's not funny.")

Ross' background is steeped in education training. So it was a natural fit for him to transition to a position such as director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Initially, it was a half-time, grant-funded position. He started his work by visiting with every new faculty member on campus. Those visits helped give Ross an idea of where to take the center.

Eventually, after impressing President Richard Davenport, the university picked up funding of Ross' position and made it full time. Today, he oversees two half-time employees and a graduate assistant.

While the center runs several programs, the dominant one is the Faculty Teaching Certificate Program.

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Meeting with Iraqi leader postponed

United States insists it's no snub

The Associated Press

AMMAN, JORDAN — President Bush's high-profile meeting with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on Wednesday was canceled in a stunning turn of events after disclosure of U.S. doubts about the Iraqi leader's capabilities and a political boycott in Baghdad protesting his attendance.

Instead of two days of talks, Bush and al-Maliki will have breakfast and a single meeting followed by a news conference this morning, the White House said.

The abrupt cancellation was an almost unheard-of development in the high-level

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Supreme Court takes up global warming for first time

Twelve states, 13 groups are suing Environmental Protection Agency

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Frustrated by Bush administration inaction on global warming, states and environmentalists urged the Supreme Court Wednesday to declare greenhouse gases to be air pollutants that the government must regulate.

The court's first case on the politically charged topic

showed an apparent split between its liberal and conservative justices, with Anthony Kennedy potentially the decisive vote in determining whether the administration must abandon its refusal to treat carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as air pollutants that imperil public health.

Justice Samuel Alito, who with Chief Justice John

Roberts seemed most skeptical of the states' position, said that even in the best of circumstances, the reduction in greenhouse gases would be relatively small.

Justice David Souter indicated that every little bit would help. "They don't have to show that it will stop global warming. Their point is that will reduce the degree of global warming and likely reduce the degree of loss," he said.

The case involves whether the Environmental Protection

Agency must regulate emissions of greenhouse gases from new vehicles under a provision of the Clean Air Act.

When a decision comes sometime before July, it could have a significant ripple effect that could extend to power plants as well as states' efforts to impose more stringent regulations on car tailpipe emissions.

Many scientists believe that greenhouse gases, floating into the atmosphere at an unprecedented rate, are lead-

ing to a warming of the Earth, rising sea levels and other marked ecological changes.

Carbon dioxide, the principal "greenhouse" gas, is produced when fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas are burned. One way to reduce those emissions is to have more fuel-efficient cars.

"We own property, 200 miles of coastline, that we're losing," Massachusetts assistant attorney general James Milkey said on behalf of 12 states and 13 environmental groups that sued EPA.



THE VALLEY, PAGE B1



Career Day a tasty treat for students

East, West high schoolers learn about the restaurant business.

SPORTS, PAGE D1

Gustavus men open MIAC play with win

Gusties rally late in fourth to defeat Macalester in basketball.

WEATHER, PAGE B3

Brighter day



Mostly sunny.
Highs around 20.
Northwest winds 10 to 15 mph.

UPCOMING

TOMORROW IN THE FREE PRESS

The steeplewright stuff

A Maine man is the state's main steeple and cupola repairman.

Rapper arrested after TV appearance

BURBANK, CALIF. — Snoop Dogg was arrested for investigation of illegally possessing a handgun and drugs as he left NBC Studios after performing on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," police said. The 35-year-old rapper, whose real name is Calvin Broadus, and two members of his entourage were arrested around 6 p.m. Tuesday after a search of his Diamond Bar home and car, Sgt. Kevin Grandalski said. Police seized a handgun and some illegal drugs, Grandalski said. He did not have details.

— The Associated Press

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Mankato, Minnesota