

Advocacy Project, Jan 27, 2012

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Ask these Rep's to give a serious look at these innovative plans to help taxpayers and demonstrate their concern about the struggle to put food on the table.
[ALWAYS USE YOUR OWN WORDS.]

House Taxation committee: Rep's Conzet 32, Feickert 3, Feinstein 14, Greenfield 6, Hunhoff 18, Kirkeby 35, Kirschman 15, Liss 13, Moser 18, Perry 24, Rozum 20, Russell 30, Solum 5, Wick 12, Willadsen 11

(You can thank Rep. Wick for 1214 and Rep. Feinstein for 1216.)

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HB 1214 Reduces the tax on food by 1/2 percent in years when sales & use tax revenue is increased enough over inflation and over the previous year. (An amendment might change that to over a 3-year average, or something like that to account for ups and downs.)

This means that the tax on food would gradually be reduced, by half-percents over a number of years. It may take many years to get to zero, but this process should not put the state in a financial bind, and it will help people benefit from lower taxes, especially when they are in the grocery store. (It does not affect the city portion of the food tax.)

Note: Even one half percent reduction in the food tax rate would get more help to low-income people, as a group, than the whole program of food tax refunds does.

HB 1216 Shifts tax off food to non-food

This bill reduces the state's portion of the food tax to 0% (from 4%) on July 1 this year, but preserves state revenue by adjusting the sales tax on non-food to 4.35% (up from 4%).

(It also does not affect the city portion of the food tax.)

While the total state revenue stays the same, the tax burden on middle-income people and lower-income people is less, because the food/non-food ratio is higher at lower income levels. What about food stamps? There is no tax on food stamp purchases, but we have found that even people with food stamps want the tax off, even with the shift of the tax rate to non-food. They also buy food with cash when the food stamps run out each month, and they hope to get off food stamps.

SB121 Provides funds for medical coverage for more low-income pregnant mothers.

Right now a baby has a family income eligibility limit that is different from the cut-off for the pregnant mother. This bill gives the same eligibility to the pregnant mother. It is a wise investment in the health and future of the state.

It needs approval of Senate Health & Human Services Committee: Senators Bradford 27, Holien 5, Hunhoff(Jean) 18, Kraus 33, Rampelberg 30, Schlekeway 11 They vote on Monday, Jan.30, 10:00am, room 412.

HB 1221 Raise the minimum wage in South Dakota to \$8.00 (up from \$7.25)

Need we say more? It takes too many workers too many hours even to reach poverty line, which is only about half of the self-sufficiency threshold. Studies show that modest increases (This is one.) in minimum wage do not cost jobs. But even modest increases help families. A lot of adults are paid only minimum wage. This is a way the state can help workers without expending state dollars.

It needs approval of House Commerce Committee: Rep's Conzet 32, Fargen 8, Greenfield 6, Hawley 7, Hubbel 11, Jensen 33, Jones 17, Kirschman 15, Miller 16, Novstrup(David) 3, Scott 21, Solum 5, Willadsen 11
(You can thank Rep. Kirschman for putting in this bill.)

Both 1208 and 1195 need approval of House Education committee: Representatives Brunner 29, Elliot 2, Haggar 15, Hunt 10, Jones 17, Killer 29, Lucas 26, Miller 16, Perry 24, Schaefer 21, Sly 33, Stricherz 8, Tulson 6, Vanneman 26, Venner 24

Both 1208 and 1195 need approval of House Education committee: Representatives Brunner 29, Elliot 2, Haggar 15, Hunt 10, Jones 17, Killer 29, Lucas 26, Miller 16, Perry 24, Schaefer 21, Sly 33, Stricherz 8, Tulson 6, Vanneman 26, Venner 24

Just about every other state has one, because the earliest years of the child are so critical to all their learning years.

HB 1195 allows school districts to charge for an early learning program

Early education is important to the future success of children in our state, particularly those from families with low incomes. Voices for Children supports this permissive legislation with an amendment that would direct school districts to provide a sliding-fee structure if the district chooses to charge. Encourage SUPPORT of the bill AND the amendment to have a sliding-fee structure. The committee votes on Monday, Jan.30, 7:45am, room 413.

SB 87 Unemployment benefits allowed for spouses in military transfers.

It needs approval of Senate Commerce committee: Senators Adelstein 32, Buhl 15, Johnston 12, Lederman 16, Tom Nelson 31, Nygaard 17, Rave 25

HB 1206 Ends South Dakota's food tax refund program, and re-directs it's remaining funds to Feeding South Dakota, the food bank that distributes emergency food to pantries, backpack programs, and other food programs to help people in need.

This would get food to a great many more people during this difficult economic time than the refund program does. For all of this fiscal year, FY2012, the foodtax refunds reach only 264 households in the whole state. Since it started in 2004, the refund program has been ineffective. It is time to do better with public funds that were intended to help people get food on the table.

This bill needs approval of House Appropriations committee: Rep's Bolin 16, Carson 20, Dennert 2, Dryden 34, Juhnke 21, Romkema 31, White 22, Wink 29, Wismer 1 The committee votes on Thursday, Feb 2, 8:00am, 3rd floor.

[Let us know if you can come to the committee for the hearing. Cathy B, 335-6222 or ryebread@breadrising.org]

Please urge support for the above bills. (Always in your own words) And ask other people you know to make contacts too.

===== AND 3 PROBLEM BILLS =====

This one is particularly worrisome.

HB1174 Drug testing for TANF and SNAP (SNAP is the new name for food stamps.)

The bill is discriminatory. It applies drug testing for only some, but not all, of the people receiving government benefits. A great many other people who have gov't benefits could possibly be suspected of drug use, but they are left exempt from drug testing in this bill and exempt from any loss of benefits.

Urge these Rep's to vote NO. Both 1174 and 1268 SHOULD BE REJECTED by the House Health & Human Services committee: Representatives Blake 13, Boomgarden 17, Haggar 15, Hawley 7, Hickey 9, Iron Cloud 27, Jensen 33, Lucas 26, Magstadt 5, Munsterman 7, Sly 33, Steele 12, Stricherz 8

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TANF is a work program for the parents. If a worker has a drug problem, it is likely to be caught by problem work performance. Failure to meet work requirements already results in penalties.

This bill adds stigma to the programs, even for non-drug-users, even tho it applies only to suspicion of drug use. It provides no help for drug users, only punishment, and, directly or indirectly, it punishes the children, kids who already suffer the economic troubles of the family. And think of the opportunity for someone with a vendetta, because a suspicion raised would surely require a DSS test, humiliating even if it is negative.

HB1268 Drug testing for Medicaid

Another discriminatory bill, it requires drug testing for people applying for Medicaid. I am fairly sure this is not allowed under federal rules, so I assume it will not pass the committee. Nevertheless, the idea is appalling, and this bill gives us a good reason to defend low-income people and the programs that help them. These programs should not be used to search for drug users, especially considering many other people get various government benefits without any drug testing. For examples, legislators, all state employees, teachers, highway construction workers, ... Those of us who own homes benefit hundreds of dollars a year in the state's property tax reduction system.

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Urge these Rep's to vote NO on this bill. House Health & Human Services committee: Representatives Blake 13, Boomgarden 17, Haggar 15, Hawley 7, Hickey 9, Iron Cloud 27, Jensen 33, Lucas 26, Magstadt 5, Munsterman 7, Sly 33, Steele 12, Stricherz 8

SB120 Higher sales tax in the summers, even on food, for education.

The problem with the bill is not about education needing money. The problem is that sales tax places a greater burden on lower incomes, more than higher incomes, and, for many families, more than they have to spare - especially when it is on food!

Maybe enough people speaking up could get them to amend this to exempt groceries, at least from the increase, over the same summer months. Even better, maybe tax on food should go down a little while the other goes up during the summer,

- recognizing that kids don't have school meals in the summer

- recognizing that this bill makes the tax higher on some other necessities, like on air conditioning & diapers.

The first to vote on this is Senate Taxation committee: Senators Fryslie 6, Hansen(Tom) 22, Hunstad 2, Lederman 16, Maher 28, Nelson 31, Nygaard 17

Please ask them to OPPOSE this bill or CHANGE it to make it more family-friendly.

===== CONTACT INFO =====

The easiest way to email them is through this website: <http://legis.state.sd.us/email/LegislatorEmail.aspx>

Or use this format: sen.lastname@state.sd.us, rep.lastname@state.sd.us

Or, a page will take a short message to 1 or 2 legislators at 605-773-3821 Senators, 605-773-3851 Rep's.

Or write: Senator _____ or Rep. _____, State Capitol, Pierre SD 57501