

First Week of 2012 Minnesota Legislative Session

By [John A. Knapp](#) on January 30, 2012

The 2012 Minnesota Legislative session convened Tuesday, January 24, with legislators hoping for a quick session, expressing their common goal of focusing on job creation and strengthening Minnesota's economy. Members on both sides of the aisle said it was time to set aside the partisan bickering and work toward compromise—a far cry from last year's session which led to a 20-day state government shutdown after DFL and Republican legislators failed to agree on a state budget.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) on Friday said that the first week in the Senate was “extremely difficult and painful” referring to a vote on Tuesday in the Senate Rules Committee. The Committee voted to cut \$444,400 from the DFL Senate staffing budget. The cuts would result in losing 12 to 14 Senate DFL staffers. On Friday Sen. Bakk announced the information the Rules Committee was given on Tuesday was misleading and inaccurate. Bakk sent a letter to Majority Leader Sen. David Senjem (R-Rochester) asking him to call another Rules Committee meeting for another vote and an explanation as to why they were given false information.

A number of constitutional amendments have been introduced, mostly by the Republicans, and still more are expected. Rather than pass laws that are subject to Governor Dayton's veto pen, Republicans are attempting to amend the State Constitution. Senate Majority Leader Senjem predicted the proposed constitutional amendments will likely consume a lot of time and result in some divisive debates. So far, the amendments are mostly controversial in nature and include S.F. 1577 requiring voters to have a photo ID to vote, H.F. 1898 which would give citizens the right to choose their health care coverage and ban Obamacare in Minnesota, and H.F. 1928 which would stop state funded abortions. H.F. 1877, introduced by DFLers, is a constitutional amendment to require a supermajority of the Legislature for all future constitutional amendments.

In the 2011 session, the Legislature voted to put an amendment on the ballot defining marriage as being between one man and one woman. Debate on the “marriage amendment” was very emotional.

Members of the DFL say the amendments have nothing to do with the session priorities of getting Minnesotans back to work. House Minority Leader Paul Thissen (DFL-Minneapolis) said Friday that the proposed constitutional amendments are distracting and divisive. Further, the House Jobs and Economic Development Committee has yet to schedule a hearing on job development in the State.