

This Week At The Capitol

By [John A. Knapp](#) on February 17, 2012

Senator Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley) and Representative Keith Downey (R-Edina) introduced an [Occupation Licensing](#) bill ([SF 1629](#) and [HF 2002](#)) on Monday that provides every person has the right to engage in “lawful occupation free from any substantial burden” of state regulation unless there is a compelling interest. Dr. Morris Kleiner, a professor of labor policy at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs, said that the state’s current licensing laws reduce jobs and discourages entrepreneurship. Kleiner added that SF 1629 could stimulate over 15,000 new jobs in Minnesota by converting the current licensing laws to less restrictive regulations. The bill passed through the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee meeting Wednesday morning and was re-referred to the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

The Senate State Government and Local Elections Committee concluded their hearing on the controversial Voter ID Constitutional Amendment on Wednesday afternoon. [SF 1577](#) passed the Committee after an 8-6 party-line vote and was re-referred to the Senate State Government Innovation and Veterans Committee. If passed, voters will be asked if the Constitution should be amended to require all voters to have government-issued photo identification in order to vote. The photo ID requirement has long been on the Republican agenda. Last year the legislature passed a similar bill but was vetoed by Governor Dayton. SF 1577 does not need the Governor’s signature, however, it must pass the House and Senate to put the question on the November ballot.

The ranking minority member of the Committee, Senator Katie Sieben (DFL-Newport), said DFLers agree that improving the integrity of the election system would be beneficial to the state. She disagrees, however, with the route Republicans are taking. “Our money would be better spent updating technology to make voting more efficient and secure,” she said. If the measure passes the ID requirement would potentially put a \$40 million burden on tax payers. Senator John Harrington (DFL-St. Paul) said the bill is “an answer in search of a problem”. Fraudulent voting has not been an issue in Minnesota, he said. The chief author of the bill, Senator Scott Newman (R-Hutchinson) told the Committee he brought the bill forward because many of his constituents have had concerns about voter fraud. A hearing for the bill has not yet been scheduled in the State Government and Innovation Committee.

Governor Mark Dayton issued his second [State of the State](#) address Wednesday evening during a joint session of the House and Senate. Dayton called for unity and cooperation in his speech and said he will stand ready to work across party lines to

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better the state of Minnesota. The governor underlined his [jobs proposal](#) and said that the 168,000 Minnesotans who want to work but are unemployed should be their top priority. Other matters of precedence outlined by the Governor included the passage of a [bonding bill](#), a proposal for a new Vikings stadium, and a four-year, \$241 million project to restore and [update the State Capitol](#) in Saint Paul. Watch the address [here](#).

The White Earth Tribe announced [a proposed partnership](#) with the State to construct a casino in the Metro area to fund a new Vikings stadium. The casino would be operated in equal partnership with the State of Minnesota and revenues would be split 50-50 between the Tribe and the State. Erma Vizenor, Chairwoman of the White Earth Tribe, said Thursday the proposal had the support of the Governor. Katherine Tinucci, Dayton's Communications Director, said this was an exaggeration. Governor Dayton is encouraging all groups to work toward a solution for the Vikings stadium but he believes authorizing a casino to fund a new stadium is problematic.