



MSU women's hockey coach steps aside

The Free Press

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"I can't say I'm 100 percent confident. I don't know what the outcome will be. It was a lot closer than I thought it would be."



Coleman files recount suit

Legal effort to keep seat may leave state without senator for months

The Associated Press

ST. PAUL — Republican Norm Coleman filed a lawsuit Tuesday challenging Democrat Al Franken's apparent recount victory in Minnesota's U.S. Senate race, delaying a resolution of the contest for weeks or months.

more votes in the November election. Coleman had seven days to file the lawsuit. "We are filing this contest to make absolutely sure every valid vote was counted and no one's was counted more than anyone else's," Coleman said. Coleman shrugged off the idea that he might concede to avoid a protracted fight that could leave Minnesota with just one senator in Washington for months. "Something greater than

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Getting started

State Legislature convenes with deficit atop agenda

By Mark Fischenich
Free Press Staff Writer

Tuesday, Jan. 6, marked the start of the 2009 session of the Minnesota Legislature, but some other dates in the coming months will be the key ones. On Jan. 15, Gov. Tim Pawlenty will give his State of the State speech to lawmakers and provide an overview of how the Republican governor will frame his looming battle with a solidly Democratic Legislature. By Jan. 27, Pawlenty is to present his proposed two-year budget

for the state — one that erases a \$4.8 billion gap between projected spending and anticipated revenue. In the final week of February, most likely the 26th or 27th, state economic forecasters will provide an updated estimate of how big the budget shortfall is. That updated forecast will be used in the final budget bills lawmakers will struggle to construct during March, April and early May. And by May 18, the constitutional deadline for the Legislature to adjourn, lawmakers will attempt to approve a final budget that Pawlenty will be willing to sign.

If legislative leaders and the governor don't agree, then the final deadline will loom. On July 1, the current two-year budget expires — meaning state government would shut down unless a special session in late May or June brought an end to the stand-off. "I'm certainly hoping it doesn't end in that," said Republican Rep. Tony Cornish of Vernon Center, who first came to the House six years ago when the state was facing a \$4.5 billion shortfall. That time, the budget was

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Days of cheap oil appear numbered

Oil companies cutting production, and demand will someday rise

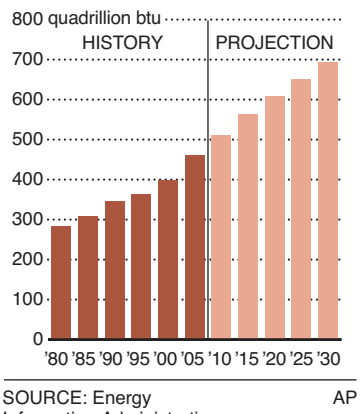
The Associated Press

HOUSTON — All that money you're saving these days at the gas pump? You might want to put it in the bank. The same cheap oil that's providing relief to drivers and businesses in an awful economy is setting the stage for another price spike, perhaps as soon as next year, that will bring back painful memories of last summer's \$4-a-gallon gas. The oil industry is scaling back on exploration and production because some projects don't make economic sense when energy prices are low. And crude is already harder to find because more nations that own oil companies are blocking outside access to their oil fields. When the world emerges from the recession and starts to burn more fuel again, and higher demand meets lower supply, prices will almost certainly shoot higher. Some analysts say oil could eventually eclipse \$150 a barrel, maybe even on its way to \$200. In such a scenario,

Energy in demand

Global energy demand is expected to increase in the coming years as the economies of developing nations like China and India expand.

World marketed energy consumption, 1980-2030



SOURCE: Energy Information Administration AP

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John Cross

Freshman state Rep. Paul Torkelson is a longtime farmer, but he also has experience as a teacher and served on boards overseeing a St. James bank and the local hospital and clinic.

An experienced rookie

Novice legislator has varied areas of real-life expertise

By Mark Fischenich
Free Press Staff Writer

LASALLE — When Paul Torkelson was sworn in Tuesday as state representative, he was the ultimate rookie lawmaker. Torkelson had never taken an oath of office before — not as a legislator, not as a county commissioner, not as a township supervisor. Prior to running for the state House seat representing Brown County and parts of Watonwan and Redwood counties, the rural St. James farmer had never run for elected office of any kind. So the ceremonies that dominate the first day of a new session were important to Torkelson, who had his

wife Cindy, his daughters and two campaign supporters with him on the floor of the House chamber. "It's humbling," Torkelson said. "I've watched legislators at work for a number of years, and to be on the floor as a legislator was quite an experience." But while he's utterly new at being an elected official, Torkelson offers life experience that could qualify him for a host of House committees. The list could include the committees on agriculture (he's a longtime crop and hog farmer), commerce (he recently resigned as chairman of the board of a local bank), education (he's a former teacher and the husband of a

teacher) and environment (he's a member of the Gov. Tim Pawlenty's Clean Water Council). Torkelson could also feel at home on committees dealing with energy (he's a former ethanol plant investor) and health care (he was on the board overseeing the St. James hospital and clinic). "He's got a lot of varied experience that I think will come in handy," said Gerald Woodley, the Brown County GOP chairman who was one of Torkelson's guests Tuesday. "... He fits the district very well." Woodley said Torkelson's agricultural experience, including his leadership positions with the Farm Bureau, and his connection to K-12 education are particularly important in a rural district that includes many school districts struggling

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UPCOMING
TOMORROW IN THE FREE PRESS
Doing windows
Amber Rahe displays "windows" at the Emy Frenzt Arts Guild.

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THE VALLEY, PAGE B1
Big drug sting
Three arrested, 90 pounds of marijuana seized.

Boy, 6, crashes driving to school
WICOMICO CHURCH, VA. — A 6-year-old Virginia boy who missed his bus tried to drive to school in his family's sedan — and crashed. His parents were charged with child endangerment. The boy drove nearly six miles toward school while his mother was asleep, police said. He made at least two 90-degree turns, passed several cars and ran off the rural two-lane road several times before hitting an embankment and utility pole about a mile and a half from school. —The Associated Press
WEATHER, PAGE B4
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