

SENATOR

Serving Big Stone, Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stearns, Stevens,  
Traverse & Wilkin Counties

# TORREY WESTROM

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## Friends,

The Minnesota Legislature adjourned and completed its work on the state's budget for Fiscal Years 2013 and 2014. The budget plan, passed mostly with the support of the House and Senate Democrats, includes \$2.1 billion in a variety of new taxes for total state spending of \$38.3 billion. It is the largest tax increase in our state's history.

Everyone will pay more under the historic 2013 tax-and-spend budget. New items that will be taxed include internet purchases; digital downloads like iTunes and eBooks; and additional tax on storage facilities, car and tractor repairs, and telecom equipment. Also, cigarettes will see an additional \$1.60 per pack sales tax increase for a total of \$2.83 per pack. On top of new sales taxes, income tax rates will rise 25% from 7.85% to 9.85% for individuals earning over \$150,000 and couples earning over \$250,000.

I want to thank everyone who wrote, called, e-mailed, and visited me during this session. Your views are very important to me, and I'm honored to serve you as your State Senator.



- Torrey Westrom



## Your Tab from the 2013 Session

DEMOCRATS' "EVERYONE PAYS" DRIVE-IN  
130 STATE CAPITOL  
75 REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.  
SAINT PAUL, MN 55155  
TEL 651 201 3400

"PURVEYOR OF QUALITY TAXES"  
ASK ABOUT OUR SPECIAL FEES



INVOICE#: 1887528

|                                          |                          |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| MOM & POP SHOP TAX,                      |                          |
| NEW FOURTH TIER                          | \$1.13 BILLION           |
| EMPLOYER TAX INCREASE                    | \$424 MILLION            |
| CIGARETTE TAX                            | \$408 MILLION            |
| SALES & GIFT TAX                         | \$137 MILLION            |
| -----                                    |                          |
| TOTAL DUE \$2.1 BILLION                  |                          |
| SIGNATURE                                | <u>Joe Taxpayer</u>      |
| -----                                    |                          |
| ITEM COUNT 4                             |                          |
| INV#: 1887528                            | MON MAY 20 18:31:56 2013 |
| *****                                    |                          |
| THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO PAY MORE TAXES |                          |
| *****                                    |                          |

# 2013 Legislative Wrap-Up

**Education:** The education budget is consistently the largest portion of the state budget. This session the E-12 Education budget saw one of the largest increases with a total spending of \$15.66 billion. It increases per pupil funding by only \$158, funds all-day kindergarten statewide (which is a reason the per pupil funding could not see a bigger increase), and has more money for early learning grants for lower-income families. Additionally, there is a continuing disparity between funding Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts and our rural schools. Minneapolis/St. Paul schools receive \$13,000 per student and rural schools average at \$9,900 per student.

**Health & Human Services:** The second largest portion of the state budget is Health and Human Services. The legislature passed a \$11.27 billion health and human services budget bill that brings a much needed increase in funding for our rural nursing homes and other long-term care facilities by 5 percent over the next two years. In addition, legislation was established creating the state-based Health Insurance Exchange mandated by the federal health care law. Small businesses with up to fifty employees can purchase health coverage in the exchange. It's estimated about a quarter of Minnesotans will use the exchange starting in October.

**New Taxes:** Everyone will pay more under the historic 2013 tax-and-spend budget. The legislature's omnibus tax bill has \$2.1 billion in new taxes, which was opposed by Senator Westrom. This bill will grow state government by 10%, while the economy only grows by 2%. A new warehouse and storage tax will raise the cost of your gas and groceries. The creation of a fourth tier income tax gives Minnesota the fourth highest income tax rate in the country. The cigarette tax was raised to \$2.83/pack. Also, new items that will be taxed include internet purchases, digital downloads like iTunes and eBooks, car rentals, livestock equipment, and equipment repair that will effect families and businesses, such as car and tractor repair.

In addition, the omnibus tax bill did increase state aid to local government aid (LGA) by providing an \$80 million annual LGA increase, \$40 million annual County Aid increase, and a new \$10 million Township aid all beginning in pay 2014. Through this new law, the LGA appropriation is increased by \$2.5 million a year for 2015 and 2016 and then frozen at the 2016 amount. Property tax payers should expect to see some relief on their property taxes because of this infusion of extra LGA.



*Senator Westrom with a school group (top) and discussing issues with constituents at the Capitol (left).*

*Senator Westrom proudly serves on the following committees: Finance; Environment, Economic, & Agricultural Finance Division; and Transportation & Public Safety Policy and Finance.*

**Child Care Unionization:** All Childcare Providers should be able to provide quality, affordable services to parents without government interference; however, legislation was passed that may force daycare providers who accept state C-CAP (daycare subsidy) funds to join the union. Many childcare providers who do not want to be unionized or can't afford it will be forced to reject C-CAP children. In turn, this will create fewer quality childcare providers who will be able to accept children of hardworking, low-income parents.

**Same-Sex Marriage:** Current Minnesota law defines marriage traditionally between "one man and one woman." Senator Westrom has long supported this law and affirms traditional marriage and families as the best design for raising children. On August 1st, 2013 a new law, that Senator Westrom vigorously opposed, passed this session will change the term "marriage" in state law to "civil marriage" and expand the definition of who is eligible from "a man and a woman" to "two persons." The new law requires gender-neutral terms, and the long-standing definitions, since the beginning of time, of husband, wife, mother, father, widow, widower, and other similar terms will no longer refer to any particular gender in our statutes. Also, Minnesota's Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was removed, which was enacted in this state in 1997.

**Second Amendment Restrictions:** Majority leaders tried repeatedly to pass legislation that would limit the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners in Minnesota. Eventually, they determined their proposals did not have the needed support to pass the House or Senate and abandoned their effort.