

The 2009 Session has ended

The 2009 legislative session ended at midnight on Monday. The legislature adjourned without agreement with Governor Pawlenty on how to close the \$6.4 billion budget shortfall. Governor Pawlenty stands firm on no new taxes.... The governor has announced that there will be no special session and the governor will use his executive powers to balance the budget.

Something to Celebrate! 22,000 Children Gain Access to Health Coverage;

An untold story of this legislative session is that 22,000 more children will have access to Minnesota Care as a result of provisions that will reduce cost and administrative barriers including eliminating premiums, the four month waiting period and the “50% rule” (under the “50% rule” Minnesotans are not eligible for Minnesota Care if their employer offers health coverage and pays at least 50% of the premium) for children under 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The newly enacted provisions are paid for out of existing resources in the Health Care Access Fund, which pays for Minnesota Care. These changes are a strong step toward the Minnesota Health Security Act (Lourey SF 9, Thissen HF 174), legislation that would ensure all Minnesotans have access to affordable health care coverage, starting with children.

New Investments in Child Care:

The federal stimulus package also made investments in child care possible this year. The legislature allocated **\$8 million** to reduce the waiting list for child care assistance as well as funding to improve the quality of child care. In addition, the legislature continued funding for the School Readiness Connections pilot program which provides continuity of care and increases access to quality care for high-risk children.

Governor Pawlenty did sign the E-12 Education bill, leaving intact all of the early childhood provisions. But we can no longer claim zero cuts to early childhood this year, as the Governor line-item vetoed several items when he signed major omnibus spending bills. Specifically:

- He signed the Higher Ed bill, but line-item vetoed all state funding for TEACH early childhood provider scholarships. (\$500,000)
- He signed the Bonding bill, but line-item vetoed \$85 million worth of projects, including \$2 million for Early Childhood Facility Grants.

Stay tuned...we will update as information on the Governors' Budget is made available.

