

MDRA PLATE TALK

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Winter 2025 Edition



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MINNESOTA DEPUTY REGISTRAR'S ASSOCIATION

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President's



Perspective



President - Jeff Lenarz #046
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HAPPY NEW YEAR MDRA MEMBERS!

I hope that you had a wonderful holiday season and were able to enjoy good food and good company! It's hard to believe that 2025 is already here but not so hard to believe that it's the middle of January with the weather we've been having...

2025 is already shaping up to be one for the record books. We have a new DNR computer system nearing completion which will replace the very old but still lovable Active Outdoors system. At the same time, we are staring down a legislative session that is already throwing fireworks before it has even begun!

*On the topic of the DNR computer system, MDRA has been closely monitoring and involved in its progress. This includes being involved in testing and demonstrations as well as meeting with DNR leadership from the Commissioner's office. We are optimistic that the state has learned from the lessons of the past (*cough* MNLARS) and that the initial rollout of this new system will be successful. However, that optimism does not keep us from approaching things with a great deal of caution. We will remain vigilant for any signs of trouble and will do all that is within our power to ensure that any issues that we foresee are corrected prior to a statewide launch.*

I won't talk too much about the legislative session here as Jim Hirst covers it very nicely in the coming pages. What I do want to mention is the Deputy Registrar Sustainability Report that is due to be released in the coming days. MDRA has viewed a draft copy of the report and we've found some concerning items in it but also many good and solid suggestions to the legislature. Suggestions that we've been advocating for years for. We expect the final report to call for revenue increases in the form of revenue sharing from DVS to Deputy Registrars. While this is encouraging, we still must navigate a deeply divided and partisan legislature on the road to enacting this change. We will most certainly rely on our membership's collective voice several times this year as we attempt to break through the gridlock that is almost certain to occur. Stay tuned!

As always, thank you for your membership and I hope that you enjoy the January 2025 edition of Plate Talk!

JEFF LENARZ, MDRA PRESIDENT

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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

JIM HIRST - Lobbyist JEFF ORTH - Chair

Our last PlateTalk article was issued just prior to last fall's November general elections. At that time, we predicted that legislative elections for the state house would likely result in close margins of control—with either the DFL or GOP holding a slight majority in that body of 134 total members. I almost included yet another possibility then of a potential split without any majority for either party, but didn't. However, that is exactly what happened in our state house with 67 members each elected for the DFL and GOP!

However, that is not yet official for our state house either! One newly elected (DFL) house member from Roseville resigned last month before taking office when it was discovered he didn't reside in the district. A special election is scheduled for late January to fill this seat (which is a DFL stronghold) but that will occur after the start of the regular session that begins on January 14. Therefore, on that date the GOP will hold a slight majority of 67-66 with one vacant seat in the state house of representatives.

But wait, there's more! Our MDRA honored lawmaker from last year (Rep. Brad Tabke-DFL-Shakopee) won his reelection with a margin of only 14 votes. During the required recount that validated that margin, it was discovered that 20 ballots had gone missing and were unaccounted for—potentially swinging the election to his challenger. This is currently in the courts getting sorted out and Rep. Tabke may not be seated at the start of the session, or he could face a special election if the courts determine it necessary as a do-over. If he is not seated, the GOP margin of control on January 14 becomes 67-65 with two vacant seats.

Prior to these developments of last month, both DFL and GOP house leadership had met after the election to create new committee memberships based on a 67-67 split that featured equal representation for both parties along with co-chairs of each party for every committee. That agreement is now on hold as the GOP believes they now have an outright majority given the one and possibly two DFL vacancies when the session starts. A majority (even temporarily on day one) would allow the house GOP to revamp the committee structure to their liking without DFL input. Meanwhile, the DFL insists that the prior agreement must be abided to and claims that the GOP will not have a "quorum" on day one to operate with which requires at least 68 total members to be present. The house DFL is now threatening not to appear at the start of the session to deny a quorum for the house GOP to operate under, and this could potentially last for weeks until the two disputed elections are finally resolved.

The stakes are high for both parties in the state house. If the GOP can establish the committee structure to their liking on the first day of the session, it will remain that way for two years. Even if the DFL claws



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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

CONTINUED

JIM HIRST - Lobbyist JEFF ORTH - Chair

back to a 67-67 split after the courts and special election(s) decide matters in the coming weeks, they won't be able to challenge anything since it would simply be denied on a 67-67 tie floor vote.

Meanwhile, there's that other chamber--our state senate with its slim 34-33 DFL majority. That body's members weren't up for reelection last fall, but it did have one special election to fill a DFL held seat (Kelly Morrison-Minnetonka) who resigned to run for the U.S. House. The DFL won and retained that seat in the election, but then last month DFL state senator Kari Dziedzic (Minneapolis) passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. A special election will be held next month to fill that vacancy (in a strong DFL district), but until then the senate will be operating with an even party split of 33-33. Since the state senate committee structure carries over from last year, there won't be any similar face-off like the house in this regard (any GOP challenge in the senate would be denied on a tie floor vote).

Meanwhile, drama in the state senate still continues with the pending litigation of DFL state senator Nicole Mitchell (Woodbury) who was charged last April with felony burglary for breaking and entering her stepmother's residence. The outcome of that case is likely to be determined later this month and, if convicted on the felony count, she would then have to vacate her seat which would require a special election. That outcome would then definitely determine control of the state senate since the Mitchell seat is in a swing district, unlike the Dziedzic seat.

With this bizarre backdrop, MDRA is determined to maneuver through this challenging landscape to advance our interests and issues nevertheless! Our past record of always working collegiately in a bipartisan manner at the capitol is all the more imperative now. As is your participation with our annual "Day on the Hill" event, scheduled for WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19 (details to follow)!

Our legislative agenda remains focused on meaningful compensation for deputies, extending the \$1 surcharge to include DVS handled transactions, making on-site duplicate title printing subject to the expedited fee, allowing proctors to offer motorcycle written test as well as DL test, and to be proactive on any other matters that may present themselves while also being prepared to stave off any negative legislation.

MDRA thanks you all in advance of the session for your attentiveness and involvement with our legislative goals and efforts. Please respond when called upon with any of our targeted "calls for action" with key lawmakers in the months ahead and we hope to see you in Saint Paul next month on February 19 for our annual Day on the Hill!

-MDRA Legislative Committee



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2025 MDRA

DAY ON THE HILL

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19th

LEAGUE OF MN CITIES OFFICES

LAKE SUPERIOR ROOM

145 UNIVERSITY AVENUE SAINT PAUL, MN

PRELIMINARY AGENDA:

- 10am - MDRA Board of Directors meeting
- Noon - Lunch provided
- 1-4pm - Meet with Lawmakers at Capitol, including Transportation Chairs!

This year's annual event interacting with our lawmakers will take place on Wednesday, February 19. The morning will feature our monthly board meeting (all MDRA members welcome) and a light lunch at the league office building before we go to the capitol and engage with key legislators. Free parking is available at the LMC parking lot adjacent to their building (please register your vehicle upon arrival with LMC front desk staff).

This event is free to members. Attendees are encouraged to join for all or any part of the day as your schedule permits!

**MORE DETAILS
TO FOLLOW!**



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TO FOLLOW!**

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TODD'S CORNER



Todd Oseby - Trainer & Business Analyst
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Minnesota Department of Public Safety
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In recognition of his exceptional dedication, outstanding service, and unwavering support for MDRA and its members, the Board of Directors proudly presented Todd Oseby with an MDRA appreciation plaque on Thursday, December 5th. Todd's consistent reliability, selflessness, and commitment to the values and mission of MDRA have made a lasting impact on the organization and those it serves. His steadfast dedication to supporting both MDRA and its members exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism and community spirit. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Todd for his remarkable contributions and continued support.

THANK YOU TODD!



Happy Holidays



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To get started, search MDRA on Facebook. You will be prompted to answer a couple of simple membership questions before getting access.

And check us out online at www.mndep.com for all the monthly meeting links, monthly meeting minutes, past Time with Training episodes and so much more!

Does your office need a password for the website? Email mndeputyregistrars@gmail.com and let them know!

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