

NEWS RELEASE
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SAILER'S BILL PROTECTS PINE RIDGE HOME

The House on Tuesday passed an omnibus Health and Human Services budget that makes many difficult cuts, including funding for child care, low-income families and mental health care. But the House stood against deep cuts proposed by the Governor to nursing homes and for those with disabilities.

The Governor proposed cutting nursing homes by \$36 million and by \$116 million for the disabled over the next three years. The House instead increased funding for nursing homes by \$100 million and cut only \$10 million from those with disabilities.

On a day in which the Legislature reduced the state's remaining \$164 million deficit with cuts to the state Health and Human Services budget, Rep. Brita Sailer (DFL-Park Rapids) and other legislators protected the state's elderly and disabled population. Included in the Health omnibus bill was Sailer's bill to help prevent the closing of the Pine Ridge Residence for the developmentally disabled in Bagley.

"The Pine Ridge facility has been home to these residents for up to 35 years," Sailer said. "If the doors are shuttered, these people would be removed from their long-time home and dispersed to facilities across the state at a far greater cost to taxpayers."

The Pine Ridge Residence has been under-funded for several years. It currently costs the facility \$123 a day to serve each patient, but is being reimbursed only \$112 a day. Sailer's bill would increase that funding to allow them to keep the doors open. "This is a relatively small amount of funding, I just hope it is enough," Sailer said.

"Pine Ridge is losing money every day," Sailer said. "What many don't realize is that this facility is the only one in Clearwater County that serves the developmentally disabled. To send these residents elsewhere could cost the state \$180 a day per resident. In addition to displacing the residents, 20 employees at Pine Ridge would lose their jobs in a county that is already experiencing 17 percent unemployment. My bill is not just morally responsible, it is also fiscally responsible."

The bill to increase funding for Pine Ridge was co-authored by Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley). A companion bill in the Senate was authored by Sen. Rod Skoe (DFL-Clearbrook).

In order to gain additional revenue for nursing homes and the developmentally disabled, the House passed an amendment to remove tax havens for large corporations. These corporations are increasingly using tax planning strategies that shift their profits (income) to low-tax foreign countries.

Along with helping to fund nursing homes and the developmentally disabled, the money generated from tax shelters would also be used to soften the cuts to mental health care.