

Legislative Preview

The 2010 Legislature will convene in St. Paul on February 4th to tackle another state budget shortfall. But, daunting as it may be, budget problems are only one of many factors that promise to complicate the upcoming session.

MADA will promote additional protections for dealers' franchise rights, focusing on rights of terminated dealers to future franchise awards in their market area, beefing up protections against unreasonable facilities requirements of the manufacturer, and giving dealers more flexibility in buying and selling dealerships. In addition, MADA will be fighting against a move by the RV Industry to weaken franchise protection laws.

In the bigger picture, Minnesota faces a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall for the current biennium. Lawmakers' options are limited, with a fifth of the two-year budget already spent. The MN Constitution requires the Legislature to balance the state's books by the end of each biennium, with the current cycle ending June 30, 2011. The \$1.2 billion deficit represents 5 percent of what's left.

Of course, no legislative session is ever simple, but the 2010 legislature can expect politics to play a bigger role in their negotiations than ever.

A defense spending bill signed into law by President Obama in October included a requirement that U.S. military personnel get at least 45 days to receive and return their absentee ballots for the general election. Minnesota's September primary currently allows only 30 days, which means it will likely be moved from September to sometime during the summer months.

Moving the Primary Election Day, also necessitated moving the political parties' endorsing conventions, which will now happen in April and May. That means those political conventions -- which is when the parties pick their endorsed candidates for the Governor's race -- are now scheduled to coincide with the busiest weeks of deal-making at the legislature. With eight sitting legislators currently running for Governor, and all 201 legislators up for election in 2010, the new convention schedule and looming election adds complication to a very difficult task ahead.

MADA sends weekly email updates about the Minnesota Legislative Session to all interested MADA members. Make sure you're getting all the latest information by updating your contact information and [subscribing to the Legislative Updates emails](#)