

## **Legislative Session Updates**



The 2025 Minnesota legislative session is about to enter the second half. After a bumpy start to the year that featured a boycott of session by House DFLers over election results, the legislature is now settled in terms of the power sharing and negotiating players that will sort their way through the emerging budget deficit. The state's budget is mostly balanced for the next two years, but it's a pile-up of one-time money keeping the system afloat. The two-year budget period following the next one shows an emerging \$6 billion deficit. Almost half of the deficit is comprised of "discretionary inflation," which is money that hasn't actually been authorized under law, reducing the amount of real cuts that need to be made. However, federal budget cuts are looming and will impact the state's budget negatively, especially in the Health & Human Services area with Medicaid cuts.



The Governor is proposing cuts across state government, including \$240 million in cuts to education programs and services. The Senate DFL wants to leave the education budget alone for two years, but is eyeing \$687 million in cuts to deal with the tails of FY 28-29. The House, where a 67-67 tie exists between DFLers and the GOP, is proposing to basically keep education funding on course over the next four years. When they reconvene on April 22, they will have a month to sort out their differences and pass budget bills by the May 19 constitutional deadline for this session to end. If they don't get their work done on time, the Governor will have to call them into a special session in June, as the state's fiscal year ends on June 30.

From MSNA's perspective, this session isn't as epic as 2023 when the MN Free Meals Program was created. However, the budget deficit is causing some lawmakers, especially GOP members, to rethink the MN Free Meals program and whether or not it should be means tested. The House GOP would like to cut off free meals at 500% of federal poverty (HF 2201), which is roughly \$160,000 of income for a family of four.

School district administrative and governance organizations are pressing the legislature to open up the nutrition surplus account for more allowable uses, including 'remodeling, reconfiguration and expansion' of kitchen and cafeteria spaces (SF 2965). The drive for expanded allowable uses is in response to the run up of nutrition fund balances in many districts. Likewise, union officials, mostly from SEIU, are pushing for a \$25/hour minimum wage for cafeteria workers. MSNA is urging a "go slow" approach, asking the legislature to delay on permanent law changes for another two years to help school admin, employees, families, and lawmakers gain a better understanding of what needs to be done to maintain a high quality free meals experience for students. The contents of SF 2965 are included in the Senate's omnibus education budget bill, SF 2255, and will be a part of end of session negotiations.

Having the state pay for a carton of milk was also brought up in a House committee hearing, as one district noted their contract food service vendor was requiring students to take and then dump an entire lunch in order to get the single carton of milk. Most self-operating programs have indicated they use a share table to help students find that single carton of milk. This bill (HF 2387) likely won't make it into the House education budget bill.

We'll have answers to state legislative changes as spring turns to summer. Thank you to those MSNA members who helped with our advocacy reception at the Minnesota Capitol in March.

## **2025 Federal Legislation Outlook and Advocacy: Protecting Access to School Meals**

In March, MSNA school and industry members joined school nutrition professionals nationwide at the Legislative Action Conference (LAC) in Washington, D.C. The policy landscape in D.C. feels notably different this year, with significant federal proposals threatening school meal access, funding, and administrative processes. MSNA urges members to take action and connect with their legislators. [#ProtectSchoolMeals](#)

### **Key Federal Proposals Impacting School Meals**

Congress is considering changes that could:

- Raise CEP eligibility from 25% to 60% ISP, disqualifying over 24,000 schools and 12 million students from the program—impacting Minnesota's Free School Meals program.
- Require income documentation from all families applying for free or reduced-price meals, increasing paperwork and delaying benefits.
- Eliminate Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), removing automatic eligibility for low-income families using programs like MFIP (Minnesota Family Investment Program), potentially affecting one million students nationwide.

Additionally, states have been notified that \$660 million in Local Food for Schools (LFS) funding will not be renewed for 2025, reducing resources for sourcing healthy, local food.

### **Legislative Highlights and Ongoing Advocacy**

H.R. 649: Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025

This bipartisan bill would allow whole and 2% milk in school meals and exempt milk fat from saturated fat calculations. Senators Boozman (R-AR) and Klobuchar (D-MN) voiced strong support for school nutrition staff and local farmers.

The FISCAL Act, introduced by Senators Fetterman (D-PA), Kennedy (R-LA), and Booker (D-NJ), calls for schools to offer milk alternatives – including plant-based options like soy or oat milk – if they meet USDA standards.

The Healthy Lunch for Healthy Kids Act, introduced by Rep. Mike Kennedy (R-UT), seeks to ban harmful additives, dyes, and ultra-processed foods in school meals. While aiming to improve nutrition, this bill would require significant investment in staffing, equipment, and training for schools to meet new standards.

Now more than ever, your voice matters.

Darcy Stueber, SNS  
MSNA Public Policy Chair  
Mankato Area Public Schools  
[DStueb1@isd77.org](mailto:DStueb1@isd77.org)

Sam Walseth  
MSNA Lobbyist  
[sam@capitolhillassoc.com](mailto:sam@capitolhillassoc.com)