

## **State Representative Peggy Scott**

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### **NEWS COLUMN THE STATE LEGISLATURE OFFERS BAILOUTS TOO**

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By Peggy Scott  
State Representative

There has been a lot of discussion on the national level about bailouts. Many people are understandably upset the federal government has put the taxpayers on the hook for hundreds of billions of dollars in bailout money for private entities. These bailouts go against the basic free market principles that have helped to make our country great.

Sadly the Democrats in the Minnesota Legislature want to be like the Democrats in Washington. So much so they are starting to act like Washington. The Minnesota Legislature has started to offer bailouts as well.

While the state budget is starting to come together, I am very disappointed the Minnesota Legislature is going down the road of bailouts. The Legislature passed the transportation bill that provides a bailout to mass transit, specifically rail lines. These rail lines are unable to operate efficiently enough to cover their own operating costs. The taxpayers are stuck bailing them out. Overall this bailout totals more than \$135 million.

The bailout comes at the expense of roads and bridges. The maintenance fund, the fund that helps get the pot holes fixed in the spring and keep the roads plowed and free of ice in the winter, is being raided to provide a bailout to transit. While people are getting stuck on the roads or dodging the many potholes in our streets, the rail systems will feel no pinch at all.

The Legislature also passed a bill to give a bailout to the city of St. Paul. In the economic development bill that was passed there is a provision to give St. Paul a bailout of over \$32 million. This bailout is for the debt the city took on to build the RiverCentre Arena. The bill also eliminates the requirement for the city to pay interest on some of the money, which brings the entire bailout to around \$50 million.

The government should not be in the business of bailouts. We should not be setting a precedent that cities can simply turn to the state government to pay for its reckless spending. Cities must be responsible for their decisions, especially when it comes to spending public dollars. Irresponsible spending should not be rewarded with a bailout.

Facing a deficit of over \$6 billion the state cannot afford to give out bailouts to any entity. Especially when the Majority tells us we do not have the money available to fund the priorities of our state, like education and public safety, at full capacity. That is why I voted to protect you from being on the hook for more bailouts and against these bills.

We should be focusing on priorities instead of bailouts.