

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ANOKA COUNTY SPEND \$544,115 FOR LOBBYING IN 2010

ANOKA COUNTY RECORD GOES BEYOND THE STATE AUDITOR'S REPORT BY DOING A COMPARISON OF EXPENDITURES BY POPULATION

In July, the Office of the State Auditor released the 2010 Local Government Lobbying Services Report, an annual report first published in 1989. This report details the expenditure of taxpayer dollars by local governments, for purposes primarily related to lobbying the State Legislature.

All lobbying expenditures by local government are paid for with taxpayer dollars in one form or another. Many times, taxpayer funds are used to lobby the Legislature or Congress to ask for more taxpayer dollars to spend. This is the primary reason why local government lobbying expenditures have been so controversial over the years.

Statewide vs. Anoka County

In 2010, a significant amount of money was spent on lobbying activities statewide, which the report breaks down into directly paid staff lobbyists, contract lobbyists, and dues paid to government associations that are used for lobbying purposes. Anoka County local governments spent a total of \$544,115 combined in these three lobbying categories.

TOP SPENDERS
Anoka County government
City of Blaine
City of Columbus

2010	Statewide	Anoka County local governments
Expenditures	\$ 3,936,266	\$248,901
Directly employed staff		
Hired contract lobbyists		
Expenditures	\$ 4,311,727	\$295,214
Local government Associations		
on Lobbying expenses		
Total lobbying expenditures	\$ 8,247,993	\$544,115
Directly employed staff	77	3
Hired contract lobbyists		
Expenditures	\$10,540,078	\$707,271
Local government		
Association memberships		

The \$150,000 Club

County government in Anoka County is one of only a handful of government entities that spent more than \$150,000 in lobbying expenses in 2010. In total there were seven local government entities, a list that includes only four of the eighty-seven counties in Minnesota. The others were the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, along with the Metropolitan Airports Commission. County government in Anoka County placed third highest in the state with lobbying expenses totaling \$264,759.

In the State Auditor's analysis, they divided up county government expenditures in Anoka County into three separate government entities. They are general county lobbying expenditures, housing and redevelopment authority lobbying expenditures, and railroad authority lobbying expenditures.

In the Anoka County Record's analysis, we have combined these three entities into one group for the following reasons. The county board and the rail authority are run by the seven county board members, and the housing and redevelopment authority is run by a majority of the county board members. It is the same group of elected officials wearing three different hats. All three of these groups tax county residents for these lobbying services, therefore all should be considered as one group.

Only the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County spent more on lobbying costs than county government in Anoka County. It is important to note that both the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County serve more residents. Hennepin County in fact, serves over three times more residents than Anoka County but only spends roughly 30% more in lobbying costs.

NO BILL, NO SPECIAL SESSION, NO SUPPORT

Opinion from the Anoka County Watchdog

While the media breathlessly reports on the faux stadium crisis and portrays a dynamic situation where stadium events are moving quickly at the Capitol, that's just not the case.

The Watchdog has extensive sources at the Capitol on both sides of the aisle who tell a far different story than the *lame-stream* media.

First and foremost, there is no Vikings bill for the legislature to consider. In a typical "ready, fire, aim!" maneuver, the governor and his legislative stadium allies have called for a special session and passage of a bill that doesn't even exist.

Call us crazy, but it would seem that the first step would be to show the world a stadium plan that identifies a site, explains the financing mechanism, allocates risk among the parties, and divides the revenues.

Yes, various stadium bills have been introduced, but there is no comprehensive bill that addresses the stadium issue in a comprehensive way.

Second, there is no appetite for a special session. The legislature already had one special session this year. A special session in November has the smelly distinction of being held during a holiday week when the public is least paying attention.

Moreover, the state will release an updated economic forecast in early December, which will likely show another deficit and obviously dampen what enthusiasm exists to hand over some corporate welfare to the Vikings.

A survey of our sources puts the odds of a special session at "0%," right now.

Of course, the governor has the sole authority to call a special session but there is no support for one from the legislature.

Most importantly, a Vikings stadium doesn't have the votes to pass. The majority of Republican legislators with whom we've spoken are opposed to corporate welfare for the Vikings regardless of what the details look like.

There isn't a lot of gusto for a Vikings stadium on the DFL side of the aisle either.

At a time when the DFL perceives that health care, education, and other program areas haven't gotten enough money, there is no way many DFL legislators want to be seen as handing over money to a wealthy corporate interest.

As things stand today, it looks like no special session and no new home for Zygi.

We found it supremely arrogant and symbolic of what the NFL stands for when League officials showed up at the Capitol this week in a limousine to extort money from Governor Dayton.