

Paul Thissen

District 61B
Hennepin County

September 29, 2015



Minnesota House of Representatives

HOUSE DFL LEADER

The Honorable Kurt Daudt
Speaker of the House
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Speaker Daudt:

As we look forward to the 2016 legislative session, many of my colleagues and I are becoming increasingly concerned about the decisions made regarding our facilities and the ramifications of those decisions for not only legislators and our staff but the public as well.

On March 25th of this year, representatives of J.E. Dunn Construction provided a letter to members of the House detailing the costs associated with using the House chamber during the 2016 legislative session and outlining the many issues that would confront us in doing so.

Not only was this among the most expensive of the options available to us, at an estimated cost to taxpayers of \$500,000, but it was also clear that using the House chamber would mean significant inconveniences for legislators and staff as well as for the hundreds of construction workers who are a part of the ongoing Capitol renovations.

More importantly, however, the choice to remain in the House chamber in 2016 will mean extreme limitations on the public's ability to access their government. There will be no access to the third floor House gallery, there will be no operating restrooms or running water in the Capitol – which will be an active construction zone, making it a public safety concern as well – and there will be little to no public space available to individuals or groups seeking to hold events or connect with their legislators on the issues important to them.

It didn't have to be this way. Other options were available to us at the time that would have both saved taxpayer money and ensured public access to legislators throughout the session. It is hard to imagine what reason there would have been to forgo those less expensive options, especially given the information available at the time.

While it may be too late to save taxpayer dollars given the amount of planning and preparation that has gone into forcing the House chamber to remain open next year, I am writing today to encourage you to look again at other options for the 2016 legislative session that will at least provide the public with some measure of access to their elected representatives and the legislative process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Thissen", written over a circular stamp.

Rep. Paul Thissen
House DFL Leader

