2020 Legislative Session Begins
Minnesota’s legislative schedule is based on a two-year biennial timeline with the first year focused on passing a two-year state budget, the second year focused on policy priorities and passing a bonding bill to fund state infrastructure. The 2020 appears to be following this similar pattern with a lot of focus on bonding and a push to pass policy priorities in a very compressed legislative schedule.

The start of the 2020 legislative session took on a more somber note as both bodies took the time to recognize the three fallen National Guard members who lost their lives when their helicopter crashed in St. Cloud last December. The House also spent time sharing honoring their departed colleague, Rep. Diane Loeffler. The two new House members who won special elections were sworn also in, Rep. Paul Novotny of Elk River and Rep. Sydney Jordan of Minneapolis.

One Minnesota Conference – A Closed Gathering of the Legislature
The One Minnesota Legislative Policy Conference is a day-long event for all members of the House and Senate. This year, the agenda included a briefing by the state economist and demographer, a briefing about redistricting by nonpartisan House and Senate staff, information on “negotiation skills and tools” and workshops on “end-of-session redesign”. This annual event has occurred since 2007 and is the result of another conference that was held from 1975-2003 called the “Minnesota Horizons Conference.”

Early Childhood Press Conference
The House DFL held a press conference to highlight their early childhood package. The $500 million package includes $60 million to continue the VPK slots for an additional biennium, $190 million for early learning scholarships and $190 million for the child care assistance program. This additional funding however is not ongoing and it’s unclear if the Senate will consider any similar measures.

Deadlines
This week, the House and Senate finalized key deadlines legislation must meet in order to advance through the legislative process. These deadlines do not apply to the House Capital Investment Division; the House Taxes, Ways and Means, or Rules and Legislative Administration committees; nor the Senate Capital Investment, Finance, Taxes or Rules and Administration committees. The deadlines are as follows:

Friday, March 13 - Committees must act favorably on bills in the house of origin.
Friday, March 20 - Committees must act favorably on bills, or companions of bills, that met the first deadline in the other body.
Friday, April 3 - Committees must act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills.
The annual Easter/Passover break is scheduled to begin Saturday, April 4, and go through Monday, April 13. When legislators return from the break, they will have just over a month to complete their work before the constitutionally mandated adjournment date of May 18.

**Committee Hearings of Interest**
On Tuesday, the House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Division will be hearing their early childhood funding proposal. This package equals $500 million investment of one-time funds to continue the VPK slots in the next biennium, additional funding for early learning scholarships (moving scholarships to birth to age three and removes the scholarship cap), child care assistance program, home visiting (including expanding access for evidence informed programs) and evaluation of the parent aware program.

**Bill Introductions of Interest**
**HF3071**: Creating additional funding and opportunities for children ages birth to three; governing certain programs and funding for home visiting, early childhood education, and child care assistance. (Note that the language in this bill will be amended to HF1., discussed above.)

**HF3186**: MDE policy bill. Includes proposal to prohibit disciplinary dismissals in a school district pre-K program (page 20, lines 2-24) and extension of continuing contract status to ECFE and ABE teachers.

**HF3192**: Authorizing Independent School District No. 441, Marshall County Central Schools, to transfer money from the early childhood and family education reserve account to its school readiness reserve account in the community service fund.