

State Rep. Jim Davnie
NEWS RELEASE

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New Caucus to Focus on Regional Foods

The discussion of local foods is making its way from the dinner table to the halls of state government. A new Local Food Caucus is being put together by State Rep. Jim Davnie (DFL- Minneapolis) and State Rep. Ron Shimanski (R- Silver Lake). The bipartisan group will host several conversations in the interim on the issue and work with the Senate, which has a local foods caucus.

“Minnesotans are interested in what they eat,” said Davnie. “They want to know where it came from and how it was raised. From the city dweller who wishes to eat healthier to the farmer hoping to diversify the local economy this issue transcends politics.”

According to some estimates the state imports almost 90 percent of the food we eat. This is in spite of the fact that we’re the seventh largest agricultural state in the United States. Because of the national commodity system the food our farmers produce is sent into national and international streams.

“Basically, we pay to ship foods into Minnesota that we could get locally,” said Davnie. “This costs us more than what our farmers get paid for the food they send out of the state. The result is that we all lose money and jobs.”

After discussing this problem with Representative Shimanski they decided to create a caucus as a way to create a place that would transcend both the jurisdictional lines of legislative committees and legislators own regional perspectives. The result was the Local Food Caucus. Their plan is to encourage broad conversations that encompass constituencies and political parties. Minnesotans involved in local food production, processing, and sales will be involved in the discussion. They plan to carry the ideas they hear into the next legislative session.

“Hopefully, the conversations that spring from this caucus will plant legislative seeds for 2011,” said Davnie. “This is an issue that can unite everyone in urban, suburban, and rural Minnesota. People are excited to learn about how we can grow our local food economy.”