

The New York World

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Track the action in Albany

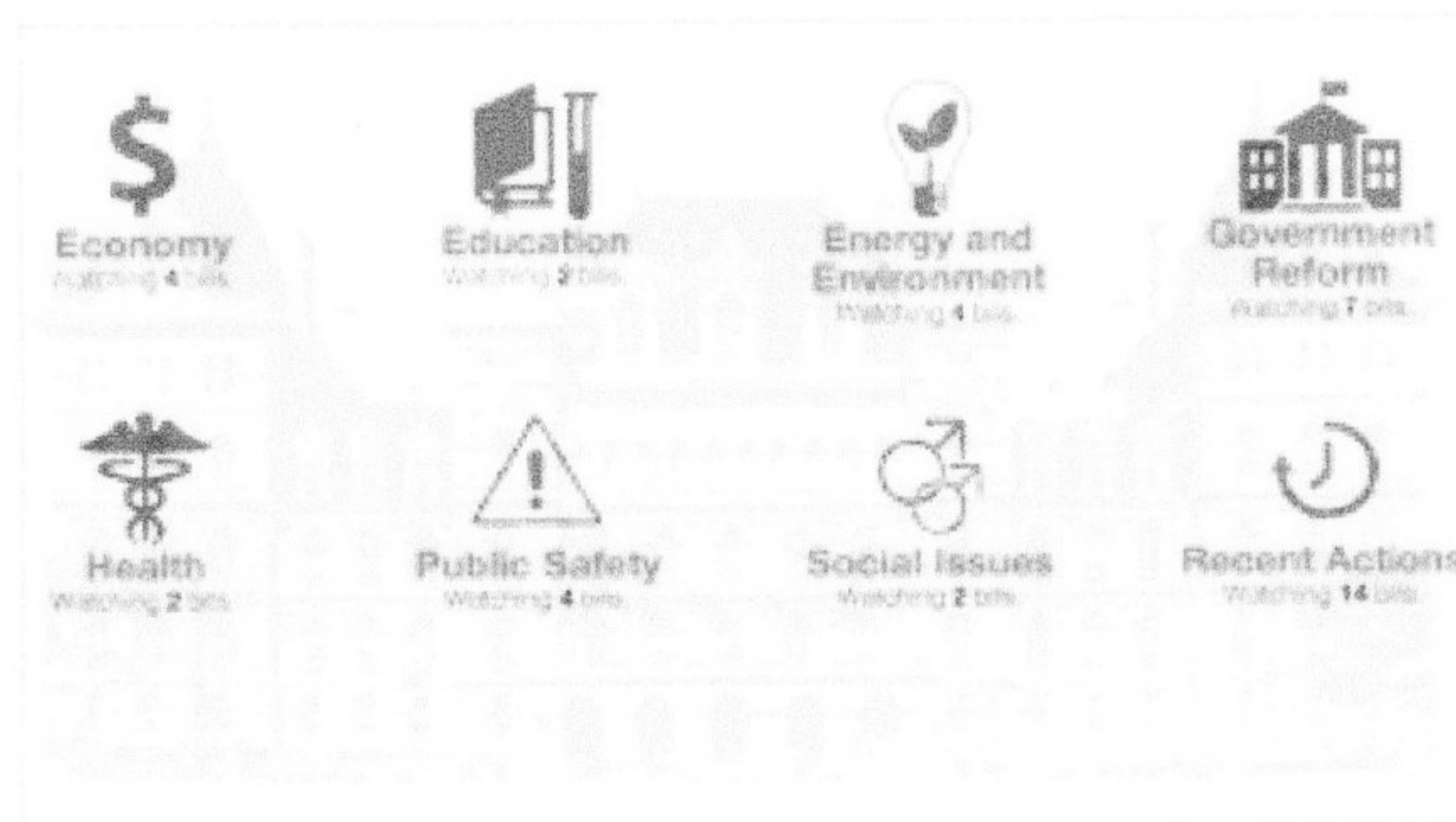
Good things happen when nonprofit newsrooms collaborate across state lines – and New York now has Minnesota to thank for helping us keep a close watch on our legislature

2 Comments

Good things happen when nonprofit newsrooms collaborate across state lines – and New York now has Minnesota to thank for helping us keep a close watch on our legislature.

Today, The New York World is launching a **New York State legislative bill tracker**, which follows a select crop of measures working their way through Albany. It uses live data from the Sunlight Foundation's **Open States Project** to update bill status, combined with our own reporters' selections of important bills to follow this year. The state legislature's current session runs through June.

The project is powered by code built by Alan Palazzolo, a newsroom developer from **MinnPost**, the excellent accountability journalism project based in Minneapolis. Alan spent the last five days in New York City building a **news application** any newsroom can use to loop the public in on statehouse actions, thanks to ProPublica's P5, which brings in newsroom developers and data journalists to its New York City office to work for a few days on a special project.



Click the image to access the New York World legislative bill tracker

His goal was to turn MinnPost's successful **Bill Tracker** into an application that any news organization, in any state, could use to monitor activity of statehouse lawmakers. Scott Klein, editor of news applications for ProPublica, generously reached out to The New York World with the opportunity to work with Alan and with Jeremy Merrill of ProPublica to build a New Yorkified version – and in the process, help them hammer out a template to share nationally. (You'll find more details from Alan **at the ProPublica Nerd Blog**.)

Of course we said yes, and worked with the MinnPost and ProPublica developers to fit New York's quirky political byways into standardized code. That posed some challenges, expected and not. Judging from Minnesota's tracker, their legislature is a fairly orderly place where members have ample time to consider measures in an open forum. New York, by contrast, is notorious for

“three men in a room” decision-making, where deals hammered out by legislative leaders and the governors go for cursory votes among the membership, often very late in the session.

That means that many of the most important bills to be voted on by the legislature won’t even exist, at least not publicly, until the middle or even end of June. But we aren’t letting that exercise in non-democracy stop us. The New York World’s bill tracker is a work in evolution. We’re starting with selected measures that our reporters have determined are significant right now. As other bills come into play, we’ll add them to our tracker – down to the final hours of session if need be.

Please **let us know** about bills that you think should be on here, and explain why they’re important.

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