

State Senator John Marty Addresses the Dec 8 meeting of the MLASG

Note: LATV filmed the meeting, which you can view on Channel 10 from Forest Lake, Scandia and Columbus. See their [website](#) for a schedule.

About 50 people braved the icy roads and slicing wind to attend the Minnesota Lyme Action Support Group meeting and hear Senator John Marty talk about Senate File 1631, the Lyme bill that will protect physicians who treat Lyme disease with aggressive antibiotics from sanctions from the state medical board. Senator Marty said he hopes the bill to pass through his committee without much opposition.

Ray Vandever introduced Senator Marty, thanking him for taking the lead on the bill. "Senator Marty has a lot of integrity and I trust him to do the people's business," he said.

Senator Marty recounted a story about a friend who had been debilitated by Lyme disease for several years, but who experienced great improvement in her quality of life after long-term antibiotic therapy. "There is very strong anecdotal evidence that antibiotics work" in the treatment of chronic Lyme, he said.

"There's so much about medicine that is unknown," Marty said. "Until 100 years ago, Doctors probably hurt more people than they helped." Doctors treating patients based on their best judgment builds a record about what works and what doesn't work, he said. He believes that in several years there will be enough evidence to prove that long-term antibiotic therapy is effective for many Lyme sufferers.

"Legislators shouldn't be telling doctors how to treat," but neither should the medical board, which is made up of bureaucrats, not doctors, Sen. Marty said. "We don't want the board stepping in to sanction doctors where there is no decided science."

Marty said he understands the fears that antibiotics are being over-prescribed, creating superbugs that resist antibiotic remedies. But he believes the concern is misplaced. He said that the majority of antibiotics are used for animal feed, not to keep animals from getting sick but to stimulate growth. He is also working on a bill that will address this issue.

Senator Marty said he understands the controversies surrounding Lyme disease, but he hopes to avoid them in the process of passing the bill. He has had many legislators approach him saying they have heard about the Lyme disease issues and asking for more information about the bill. He said the bill will go through only two committees - one each in the House and Senate - before going to the full bodies for a vote. He stressed to the group the importance of constituents telling their legislators why this bill matters to them.