

infoNET

A publication of the Governor's DD Council & ID Action

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE 2010

ID Action is leaving the State Capitol behind and taking Advocating Change Day to the streets – your streets!

PAGE 4



Grim Budget Forecast Ahead

Legislators are bracing for what may be the worst budget since the 1980s farm crisis.

Grim budget figures will greet legislators when they return to work in January. The Legislature's fiscal experts say legislators may be forced to trim the \$5 billion state budget back to \$4 billion when they begin work on budget next year.

Rising unemployment rates and lower profits for businesses mean fewer taxes are being paid. Less taxes means the state has less money to spend, even though demand for social services is increasing.

Republicans and Democrats seem to agree – they are facing a \$1 billion hole in the state budget in fiscal year 2011 (which begins July 1, 2010). Medicaid and Education make up nearly \$2 billion of that \$5 billion budget, so it is probably unrealistic to assume they won't get cut. A \$1 billion cut would be 20% of the state's budget, which has already been reduced by nearly \$1 billion over the past year. Cuts like this will hurt.

GRIM BUDGET CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

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“When the people become involved in their government, government becomes more accountable, and our society is stronger, more compassionate, and better prepared for the challenges of the future.”

California Governor Arnold Swartzenegger



Grim Budget Forecast Ahead (continued)

Insiders say that the Governor is likely to call for an across-the-board cut soon, to help make sure the current year's budget (fiscal year 2010) balances when it ends in June 2010. Some say it could be as much as 5%.

Most likely this cut will come after the state's Revenue Estimating Conference meets on October 7. Every 1% cut made across the board in 2010 equals \$58 million. The amount of the across-the-board cut will depend on how much a budget gap the REC expects. For example, if the deficit is over \$200 million, the Governor will need to enact a 4-5% across the board cut.

The Governor could also wait until the legislature comes back into session ask them to backfill cuts in some areas to lesson the blow to certain programs or state agencies.

Once the REC sets its initial estimate for FY 2011, we will know the actual budget gap for the coming fiscal year. The legislative fiscal bureau has projected a \$930 million gap, but new estimates could rise to \$1.2 billion.

This is not very good news for people who depend on state funded services to live and work independently.

What can you do? Start talking to your legislators now about the importance of the state-funded services you receive, and what would happen if you no longer received them. Legislators need to know the impact funding decisions have on the people they are elected to represent. The only way they will know is if you tell them.

Who are my legislators? The names of your state representative and state senator are listed on the mailing label. If you have access to the Internet, go to www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/.

Where do I call my legislators this time of year? Call your legislators at home, since they are not at the Capitol until January. You can find this number by calling your county auditor, or going to your local library. You can also go to: www3.legis.state.ia.us/ga/legislators.do.



CHECK BACK ONLINE!

If and when budget cuts are announced, we will post them immediately on the *infoNET* website.

Go to www.infonetiowa.com on October 7 for the most current information on the state budget situation.

Budget Subcommittee Gets Early Start

Budget subcommittees rarely meet outside the legislative session – but this is no ordinary year. The Health & Human Services Budget Subcommittee has a lot going on this summer, with groups looking into Mental Health/Disability Services funding, Mental Health Institutes, and reorganization efforts.

For that reason, the subcommittee will meet via conference call on October 6 from 11 a.m. to Noon to discuss:

- Commissions and Boards (*see next article*)
- Substance Abuse/Tobacco/Gambling Treatment Efficiencies
- DHS Reorganization (*see next article*)
- Mental Health (Department of Human Services)
- Mental Health Institute Taskforce (options to close an MHI)
- Other

If you are interested in these items, you can participate in two ways:

- 1) Go to room 103 of the State Capitol at 11 a.m. on October 6. You can listen to the discussion there. You cannot participate in the discussion – it is a legislative subcommittee meeting.
- 2) Join the conference call by dialing in 1-219-509-8020, Code # 877357. This number is **not** toll free and long-distance charges will apply, unless you have unlimited long distance on your plan. You are not allowed to participate in the call – you are only allowed to listen in.

For agenda & a list of legislators participating: www.legis.state.ia.us/lsadocs/IntComAgen/2010/IATCM001.PDF

CITY ELECTION REMINDER!

Just a quick reminder – voters will go to the polls on Tuesday, November 3 to elect their city officials. City council races in many cities are competitive, with more than one person running for each seat.

So what types of issues do city councils decide? City councils decide how much you will pay in city taxes, and then how those taxes will be spent. City services that are funded by city taxes include public libraries, roads, water and sewer, trash collection and recycling, street lighting, sidewalks and curbs, swimming pools and playgrounds, and public transit. City councils also make decisions on land use and building codes that ensure accessibility.

In most cities, council races are non-partisan. To find out who is running for city council in your area, contact your county election office or county auditor.

Advocating for Change Day Goes Local

Advocating for change is always important, which is why this year ID Action (Iowans with Disabilities in Action) will be leaving the State Capitol behind and taking Advocating for Change Day to the streets, your streets.

ID Action wants to work with you to plan and implement Advocating for Change campaigns and events in your own communities. If you have something that you want to change to make your city, county or state a better place for Iowans with disabilities, this is your chance to be heard.

ID Action is offering a limited number of grants to individuals and groups to help organize local advocacy campaigns around disability-related issues. Grant awards of up to \$2,000 are available for campaign activities that may include educational workshops, grassroots and coalition building activities and public forums. Since ID Action is a nonpartisan project, grants may not be used to advocate for a particular political party or candidate.

Funds are limited, so use your imagination and be creative in your efforts! Grants are only available for a limited time, so apply early to increase your chances of receiving a grant. Applications are due on November 13, 2009 [Click here to download a grant application](#) or call (866) 432-2846 to request a grant application in the mail.

ID Action will host two informational teleconferences if you need more information or assistance with your grant request or event/campaign planning. If you would like to sign up for one of the following teleconferences, please call Fran at (515) 281-9082 or toll-free at (800) 452-1936.

- Monday, October 12 at Noon
- Monday, October 19 at 4:30 p.m.

WOMEN ON BOARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

ID Action is offering two scholarships for \$75 each to pay the costs for any two people interested in attending the Des Moines Women on Boards event. The event will be held Thursday, **November 12 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Des Moines at the Embassy Suites on the River.**

The event is being held to educate and prepare women for board service. Panelists are top-level executives with extensive board experience and a desire to share their knowledge and necessary tools for serving as a director. Topics include: being an effective board member; how to position yourself to get on a board; how to transition from serving on non-profit boards to for profit boards.

Local sponsors of the event include the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Women's Resource and Action Center, National Association of Women's Business Owners (Iowa Chapter), and Women's Development Connection.



Thanks to Our Survey Takers

Thanks to all of you who took the time to take our survey this year. Our annual reader surveys give us great ideas and help make sure the information we give you is current, useful, and interesting.

infoNET has again scored high with our readers. You like the design and content, think it is current and unbiased, but also enjoy it when we change things up. So here are some things we learned from you:

- Redesign the publication to make it easier to read. *As you can see, we have done that!*
- Help readers navigate the publication more quickly. *The new design and easy to access table of contents will do this for our readers who get infoNET by mail. For those of you receiving infoNET electronically, our new e-newsletter format gives you “teasers” for each story, allowing you to read only those stories of interest to you.*
- Look into new ways to communicate, including social networking technologies like Twitter and Facebook. *infoNET will be working with its partners in ID Action to develop a Facebook site and use Twitter and text messaging to communicate during the legislative session and when interesting news hits throughout the year.*
- Continue to find ways to translate complex issues into plain English. *This is always a struggle but one we pledge to improve on each year. It is okay to keep reminding us!*
- Continue to let you know when there are chances for you to let your elected officials know how you feel, and where you can find the resources to prepare for these opportunities. *Resources are added frequently to our online Advocacy Toolkit.*
- Make it easier for us to contact our elected officials, and write letters to the editor. *Coming soon to infoNET is a new tool called Voter Voice. The Voter Voice system will be an “Action Center” which makes sending a letter to the editor or emailing the Iowa Legislature, Governor, or US Congress as easy as a couple clicks of your computer mouse. Watch for details in our next issue of infoNET.*

Unfortunately, there is only so much we can control. Those of you receiving *infoNET* by mail will get their information more slowly. Budgets are limited, so we cannot send you *infoNET* by first class mail. That means slower delivery for those of you without Internet access.

We also cannot provide our mailed readers all of the materials available on our website – nor would you want us to kill that many trees!

For those without home Internet access, we do encourage you to go to your local library. Most libraries offer free Internet and computer access, and many have classes for those of you that have not used the Internet before.

GIFT CARD WINNERS!

We randomly drew three names from those that took our 2009 reader survey.

Congratulations to the following readers – you have won a \$25 gift card!

Jeannie Theis of Sioux City

Connie Williams of Davenport

Donna Feltes of Maquoketa

Mental Health/Disability Services Group Meets Again

The Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Stakeholder Task Force met a second time this month. The Task Force plans to meet every two weeks until its work is completed.

The group is charged with finding out a way to distribute the existing MH/DS allowed growth funds next year, knowing that demand is up but funding will likely remain unchanged. The group has also been asked to look at a longer-term solution to the funding of the system.

Members of the work group discussed the history of the MH/DS funding system in the first two meetings. Future meetings will begin to address the short-term solutions for the 2011 session, and longer-term solutions that look at regional delivery systems, lifting local levy restrictions, and addressing inconsistencies in services and funding.

You can view all the information available to the work group members at: www.legis.state.ia.us/scripts/docmgr/docmgr_comdocs.dll/showtypeinterim?id=true&type=ih&com=502. If you want input into this process, contact one of the members of this group:

Jim Aberg, Opportunity Village
(641) 355-1285 - jaberg@oppvill.org

Teresa Bomhoff, NAMI - (515) 284-4447 -
tbomhoff@mchsi.com

Shelly Chandler, Iowa Association of Community Providers - (515) 270-9495 -
schandler@iowaproviders.org

Patty Erickson-Puttmann, Woodbury County CPC Administrator - (712) 279-6459 -
perickson@sioux-city.org

Bill Gardam, MH/DS Interim Division Administrator (DHS) - (515) 281-5808 - bgardam@dhs.state.ia.us

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ckrogme@dhs.state.ia.us

Angie Plager, consumer/advocate - (515) 554-9759 -
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Carl Smith, consumer/advocate - (515) 294-0317 -
csmith@iastate.edu

Jennifer Vermeer, DHS Medicaid Director - (515) 725-1121 -
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Karen Walters-Crammond, Polk County CPC Office - (515) 243-0867 - karen@pchs.co.polk.ia.us

Mr. Craig Wood, Linn County CPC Administrator - (319) 892-5670, -
craigewood@mchsi.com

Meetings are held in room 103 of the State Capitol from 9:30 a.m. to Noon, and are scheduled for October 7, October 21, November 4, November 18 and December 9.

Women on Boards Scholarships *(continued)*

If you would like to apply, please tell us why you want to attend this event in 250 words or less. Mail your essay to the following address by Friday, October 30:

Des Moines Women on Boards
Scholarship
c/o Iowans with Disabilities in Action
P.O. Box 71369
Des Moines, Iowa 50325

Contact us with any questions at (866) 432-2846. For more information about this event: www.DesMoinesWOB2009.eventbrite.com.

IOWANS SPEAK OUT ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

The national health care reform discussion has been in the news a lot these days thanks to the near fights breaking out in August town hall meetings across the country. But here in Iowa, things are moving along quietly and methodically.

The Legislative Health Care Reform Commission met for the first time earlier this month and created three subcommittees:

Administration of Health Care Reform in Iowa Work Group - This

workgroup is focusing on how health care reform in the state should be administered. Ted Williams, of the Williams Group in Des Moines chairs this group. They will meet October 15 from 2-4 p.m. in Room 19 of the State Capitol. You can view more information on this group at:

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=508>.

Coverage of Adults Work Group – This work group focuses on health care coverage of adults and is chaired by Dr. David Carlyle of the McFarland Clinic in Ames. The group met on September 28 to talk about the children’s health insurance program (hawk-i) and the IowaCare program. You can view more information on this group and the September 28 meeting at:

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=506>.

Use/Creation of a State Pool Work Group - This workgroup is focusing on the use or creation of a state pool for health care coverage for non-profit employers and



“Just because you don’t take an interest in politics doesn’t mean politics won’t take an interest in you.” Pericles (430 B.C.)

local government entities. The work group is chaired by Marcia Nichols of AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees). The work group met on September 29 to hear testimony from small non-profit employers and local governments about the challenges they face finding and keeping affordable health insurance for their employees. The testimony of these people can be found online: www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=507.

The group will meet again on October 8 to hear testimony from insurance companies about the products and plans they offer. You can view more info on this group at: www.legis.state.ia.us/asp/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=507.

ACTION ALERT!

SUBMIT YOUR IDEAS ON HEALTH REFORM

Legislators passed the Iowa Health Care Reform Act (SF 389) in the 2009 session. The bill established a Health Care Coverage Commission – and one of its tasks is to find ways to help small non-profit employers provide health insurance coverage to their employees.

The Commission had its first meeting on Wednesday, September 9. The state pooling workgroup (which is charged to address these non-profit issues) held a public hearing on September 29 to give non-profit employers a chance to talk about the difficulties in providing health care coverage for their employees. It's not too late to give your two cents worth.

If you are a non-profit organization or work for a non-profit organization, and are struggling with health insurance coverage, share your experience:

1. Email Charlie Wishman at CWishman@afscmeiowa.org with your testimony.
2. Make sure you include your name and contact information.
3. Understand that this testimony will be posted on the Web, so your comments will be public.
4. Address your testimony to Marcia Nichols, Chair, Use/Creation of State Pool Workgroup.

While you can write your testimony however you wish, the work group has asked that you consider the following questions when providing information. You do not need to answer them all, they were simply developed as a guide. - *“What has been your experience in trying to offer health insurance benefits for the employees of your organization?”*

- How many full and part-time employees you have
- What kind of coverage, if any, you offer now (deductibles, percentage co-pay, etc.)
- What percentage or amount of the premium is paid by employee and the agency or organization
- Trends over the last 5 years (deductible/premium increases, amount of premium paid by staff, etc.)
- What percent are health insurance premiums of your total agency budget?
- What strategies have you tried/are trying now to be able to offer health insurance to your employees?
- During this time period, have you had to change insurance carriers in order to afford to provide coverage? If so, how many times and what difficulties might have been encountered in doing that?
- What recommendation(s) would you give this commission concerning our efforts to extend affordable, quality health coverage to you organization?

*[FirstName] [LastName] OR CURRENT RESIDENT
[ADDRESS]
[Address2]
[City], [State] [Zip]-[Zip4]*

*Your US Representative is: [US Representative]
Your State Representative is: [Representative]
Your State Senator is: [Senator]*

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