

infoNET

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

ADVOCACY WORKS!

State Representative Renee Schulte shares a story about how local advocacy really does work.

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Session Nears End

Legislators are on target to end on or before their 80-day deadline on March 31.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Legislators are on track to shut down the legislative session sometime before March 31, their 80-day deadline. Legislators are so confident of their progress to date they are now shooting to adjourn on Friday, March 26. While that seems quite possible, the end of session always hits a snag that delays things a few days. By shooting for March 26, legislators have a little wiggle room. We do know this – legislators do not want to end session on April 1.

This update will be shorter than usual, because the minute we write about something, it will have changed. Legislators are working today (Friday) as we write this, so please keep in mind that what you are reading is a snapshot in time. To keep up on things at the Capitol in these final weeks:

- ☑ Watch our website (www.infonetowa.com)
- ☑ Keep tabs with us on Facebook (search under “infonet”)
- ☑ Check on bill status with our online bill tracker (<http://www.ialobby.com/CPCBillTracker/tabid/59/Default.aspx?cid=infoNET>)

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“The most important political office is that of the private citizen.”

Former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis

BUDGET NEWS:

Experts say no change in revenues.

Depending on whether you are a “glass half full” or a “glass half empty” person, the findings of the state’s economic advisors may be good or bad news. The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) met last week and concluded that their December estimate for this fiscal year (FY 2010) did not change, and next fiscal year (FY 2011) estimates only go up very slightly (less than 1%). It basically means Iowa’s economy has stopped its decline and is leveling out – but it is a far cry from the recovery everyone hoped to see.

You half full types (that’s me) see this as good news. Legislators will not be forced to make additional cuts that would inevitably hurt Iowans who depend on state-funded services. It also means there is more time for creativity and finding ways to get more bang for the public buck. It also means we’ll have to tighten our belts for the next couple years, but we won’t end up with a California or Illinois type of budget crisis (these states are spending billions more than they have – Illinois must cut \$13 billion out of their budget, or raise taxes to cover the spending).

Those of you that see the glass half empty will be disappointed with these findings. This means that there are no additional dollars to fill the growing holes in the education system, in the mental health/disability services system, and in Medicaid. It means more people on waiting lists, more people dropped from services, and struggling providers. The new legislators elected this fall may come in with great ideas for services, but won’t be able to do much without additional funds. Case in point – anything you do to change the current MH/DS system costs money up front. Sometimes you have to spend money to save money – and when you don’t have the upfront cash, it’s tough to get the backend savings.

Good news or bad news, it means a very challenging session will be ending soon. You decide on that one.

BUDGET NEWS:

Experts say no change in revenues.

The House passed the Health and Human Services Budget bill ([HF 2526](#)) on Thursday, March 18 after a quick and friendly debate. This budget typically takes at least one day to debate, and usually has 30-40 amendments filed. Yesterday the debate lasted only three hours and only 10 amendments were filed and debated. Another sign that everyone – majority and minority party – is ready to finish up on time, if not early.

Rep. Lisa Heddens of Ames led the debate on the bill. She “found” an unspent \$7 million pot of money in the Underground Storage Tank Fund, and was able to give several programs an unexpected boost in dollars. These lucky programs include MH/DS state cases (\$1 million), PKU funding (\$20,000), child health specialty clinics (\$15,000), day care for exceptional children in Polk County (\$200,000), Four Oaks autism pilot in Linn County (\$25,000), Family Support Subsidy (\$100,000), and MHIs (\$350,000),

Nursing homes got an \$8.5 million increase from last year’s “quality assurance fee.” This fee was a tax on nursing homes that was used to draw down additional federal dollars. Nursing homes got the money they paid in the “tax” back plus a bit extra for their trouble – the state got to keep the rest to help in funding Medicaid. There is a rumor that another \$2 million remains unspent in this pot of money.

Here is a quick run down of the key items funded in the HHS budget:

- ☒ **Assuring Better Child Development (ABCD II)** child mental health services (\$304,885 – no change)

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infoNET is published every two weeks during the legislative session. Since there are less than two weeks left (but actual adjournment remains a mystery), the next issue will be written shortly after the session ends. A final report is then issued 30 days after adjournment, when the Governor’s veto period ends. Then we will resume our interim schedule - every other month. *Stay updated on our website or Facebook.*

Budget News (continued from page 2)

- ☑ **Audiological services** and hearing aids for children (\$187,890) – this was originally slated for a small cut, but funding was added back during House debate.
- ☑ **Brain Injury facilitator services and training programs** (\$489,868) - \$28,000 cut was added back to this during floor debate, but there is still a \$28,000 cut. It is our understanding the cut will come to the Council funding – not to services.
- ☑ **Child Health Specialty Clinics** (\$788,303 – no change in funding, but combined with the one-time funds from the Underground Storage Tank Fund, there is an overall increase of \$15,000).
- ☑ **Dental services** for indigent elderly and persons with disabilities (\$31,597 – a cut of \$3,511).
- ☑ **Epilepsy education and support** (\$57,013 funding – which is a \$31,885 cut)
- ☑ **Family Support Subsidy** (\$1,167,998 – which is a \$355,000 cut) – combined with the \$100,000 increase from one-time underground storage tank funds, this is a \$255,000 cut. This program is being phased out. No one will be dropped, but no additional families will be added.
- ☑ **Iowa Compass** (\$23,544 - \$2,616 cut)
- ☑ **Medicaid** (\$418.9 million, which is a decrease of \$191.2 million) – this allocation uses \$187 million from the state's Cash Reserve Fund and assumes Congress will extend the enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the federal Medicare Part D methodology will change (\$36 million). After all this backfill, Medicaid is underfunded by \$23.1 million for FY 2011.
- ☑ **Medicaid Provider Rates** continue at their current levels (which were reduced by 2.5% when the Governor made the across the board cuts last year; some were exempted from the cut)
- ☑ **Mental Health Institutes** (\$22.9 million, which includes the additional \$350,000 from the underground storage tank fund) – this is an increase of \$2.3 million (most is to replace lost federal matching funds).
- ☑ **Mental Health Workforce Shortage Programs** (\$184,050 – no change)
- ☑ **MH/DS Allowed Growth** (\$48.7 million) – no change in formula and funding, and continues the \$13.5 million across the board cut from the current fiscal year.
- ☑ **MH/DS Community Services** (\$14.2 million – no change)
- ☑ **MH/DS State Cases** (\$10.3 million – no change, but another \$1 million is appropriated from the underground storage tank fund in order to reduce waiting times for services)
- ☑ **PKU (phenylketonuria) grants** for special foods (\$160,582 - \$15,000 cut, but \$20,000 in one-time funds from the underground storage tank were added during debate, so there is an overall increase of \$5,000 for this program).
- ☑ **Prevention of Disabilities Council** (\$43,700 - \$4,856 cut)
- ☑ **State Resource Centers** (\$24.3 million – a cut of \$1.3 million)
- ☑ **Tuition assistance for persons assisting people with disabilities** (\$50,000 – no change)
- ☑ Adds language that directs DHS to collaborate with other agencies, county central points of coordination, service providers, and others to review and make recommendations to **streamline regulations on MH/DS providers**, and increase public access to costs, quality, and outcomes in the current system. The report is due by 12/15/2010.
- ☑ Requires DHS to consult with stakeholders to review and make recommendations on the development of subacute mental health care options at the state's mental health institutes (MHIs) and 16-bed **community based alternatives**.

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Budget News (continued from page 3)

- ☑ Requires DHS to develop a plan for **transitioning remedial services** from fee-for-service to the managed care plan, and consult with stakeholders in doing this. The plan is to be completed by 12/31/2010, and implemented by 7/1/2011.
- ☑ Continues to allow the **multi-county MH/DS pilot project** in northeast Iowa for a third year.
- ☑ Requires the **Intellectual Disabilities waiver waiting list to go statewide** in FY 2011, and requires DHS to develop a way to prioritize the allocation of slots (effective when signed).

If you want more information on this budget:

- ☑ You view the bill at: <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&ga=83&hbill=HF2526>.
- ☑ You can view an excellent analysis of the bill prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau at: <http://www3.legis.state.ia.us/noba/noba.do;jsessionid=B6AA51AEFC5BA32541A97A20EC8220AD?ga=83&session=2&bill=655>.

All other budgets are making their way through the process quickly. The only two bills not yet introduced are the Infrastructure Budget (gambling \$) and Standings Budget (built-in appropriations – the ones required by law). Here is where all the budget bills are as of Friday, March 19:

- ☑ **Administration/Regulation – [SF 2367](#)** (Status: Passed Senate; House Floor)
- ☑ **Agriculture/Natural Resources – [HF 2525](#)** (Status: Passed House; Senate Floor)
- ☑ **Economic Development – [HF 2522](#)** (Status: Passed House; Senate Floor)
- ☑ **Education – [SF 2376](#)** (Status: Passed Senate; House Floor)
- ☑ **Federal Block Grants – [HF 2519](#)** (Status: Done – to Governor)
- ☑ **Health/Human Services – [HF 2526](#)** (Status: Passed House; Senate Appropriations Committee)
- ☑ **Judicial Branch – [HF 2521](#)** (Status: Done – to Governor)
- ☑ **Justice Systems – [SF 2378](#)** (Status: Passed House & Senate; back in Senate with House Amendment)
- ☑ **Transportation – [SF 2481](#)** (Status: Passed Senate; House Appropriations Committee)

Capitol News

This week, legislators gave final approval to the “**Ed Thomas bill**” – named after the Aplington-Parkersburg coach who was killed by a former student who had been recently released from a mental health facility. The bill ([SF 2352](#)) requires hospitals to notify law enforcement when a suspect who is hospitalized for mental illness is released.

Legislators on the Government Oversight Committee have started investigating the **Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB)** after news reports broke of misuse of public tax dollars. Now the FBI is launching an investigation too, since federal money was involved. In a nutshell, the executive staff and board of the association that represents school boards misspent (and maybe illegally spent) public dollars in what is looking like a scandal similar to CITEC. Legislators will continue to review this over the summer and come back with recommendations on better control and oversight in organizations that receive state and federal dollars through dues.

The Department of Inspections and Appeals went after that Iowa institution – **Maid Rite**. DIA has asked that Maid Rite change its decades old way of cooking meat in order to insure the safety of the product; Maid Rite says it will change the flavor of the food. The Senate passed a bill allowing them to keep doing it the way they always have; the House passed a bill requiring them to meet public health standards. This is one of those issues that will be decided in the end-game negotiations.

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Capitol News (from page 4)

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has managed to get a late leadership bill filed that **takes away a county sheriff's right to deny gun permits**. These bills would require permits to be issued to anyone that applies, as long as they are not on the FBI list that denies them the ability to own a gun. This list includes people who have been involuntarily committed for treatment for substance abuse or mental illness. These bills ([SF 2379](#) & [HF 2528](#)) were filed by House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal.

On the other hand, the Senate gave final approval this week to a bill **prohibiting domestic abusers from having firearms**. The bill ([SF 2357](#)) is on its way to the Governor. "It's been about 10 years that we've been trying to get something on this front done," said Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal, D-Council Bluffs. "I think that's really a major accomplishment in terms of protecting people from domestic violence and protecting people from ending up getting murdered." The bill would apply to people convicted of domestic abuse assault or persons under a domestic abuse restraining order.

The bill on **texting while driving** ([HF 2456](#)) was sent to conference committee this week, and legislators are trying to see if they can find a compromise. The House passed a limited bill that prohibited 16-18 year olds from sending texts while driving. The Senate version prohibited all drivers from reading, writing, or sending texts while driving. This too will be a decision made in the last days of session.

Political News: Candidate Filing Deadline

Anyone wanting to run for state, congressional, or legislative office must file candidate forms by 5:00 p.m. today (Friday, March 19). Those running for county office this year have until March 31. You can view the entire list at: <http://www.sos.state.ia.us/pdfs/elections/2010/candlistprim.pdf>

Seventeen legislators have decided to step down this year, including **all** of the Sioux City legislators. Here is a quick run down:

State Senate

- ✓ **Three State Senators will step down** – two Democrats (Sen. Steve Warnstadt of Sioux City and Sen. Roger Stewart of Preston) and one Republican (Sen. Ron Wieck of Sioux City)
- ✓ Democrats have 19 seats to defend this year, two of which are open. Republicans will defend 6 seats, one of which is open.
- ✓ Former state representative Bill Dix will challenge Sen. Bill Heckroth of Waverly.
- ✓ Former state representative Sandy Greiner will challenge Sen. Becky Schmitz of Fairfield.

State House of Representatives

- ✓ **8 Democratic Representatives will not seek re-election** – Rep. Polly Bukta of Clinton, Rep. Marcella Frevert of Emmetsburg, Rep. Wayne Ford of Des Moines, Rep. Elesha Gayman of Davenport, Rep. Mark Kuhn of Charles City, Rep. Dolores Mertz of Algona, Rep. Roger Wendt of Sioux City, and Rep. Wes Whitehead of Sioux City,
- ✓ **6 Republican Representatives will not seek re-election** – Rep. Mike May of Arnolds Park, Rep. Christopher Rants of Sioux City, Rep. Rod Roberts of Carroll (who is running for Governor), Rep. Kent Sorenson of Indianola (he is running for Senate against Sen. Staci Appel), Rep. Doug Struyk of Council Bluffs, and Rep. Jodi Tymeson of Winterset
- ✓ Former state senator Stewart Iverson will challenge Rep. McKinley Bailey of Webster City
- ✓ David Thede, the husband of Democratic Rep. Phyllis Thede of Bettendorf, announced he will run for the Senate seat currently held by Republican Sen. David Hartsuch.

Advocacy Works!

Written by Rep. Renee Schulte of Cedar Rapids



This week Representative Annette Sweeney and I celebrated our 1/4 year birthday with cookies from the State Training School in Eldora and Quakerdale of New Providence, Iowa. The goal of the celebration was to raise awareness of the extreme budget cuts facing our

mental health programs for children.

Superintendent Mark Day and Ralph Allbee of the State Training School brought several young men from their Honor Corp to serve cookies baked in their bakery at the school. Peg DeArmond joined us from Quakerdale to advocate for the needs in the child welfare community. Legislators from both Chambers were invited to meet the program representatives and sample goodies.

The budget is dire this year. Education has received a two percent increase in allowable growth over FY 10 (rather than the typical 4 percent increase) which some how has been interpreted as a cut. The **HHS budget** took an original 10 percent cut in the across the board cut and we're looking at another \$172 million gap.

The budget for juvenile programming at Eldora, Toledo, and the MHIs was drastically cut. Many programs were being funded at dangerously low rates. The initial budget request would close over half of the beds in our facilities for children and adults.

The visit to the State House by the programs could not have come at a better time. The conversations held over cookies, prompted a serious look at the funding crunch facing our facilities. Today, **an amendment** to the bill in appropriations that adds much needed funding to these programs.

The challenges facing mental health were not all fixed. However, lives of juveniles in Iowa were changed for the better by their willingness to advocate for programs that work.

A special thank you to the Honor Corp members from the State Training School for their help!

This was taken from Rep. Schulte's weekly newsletter. You can sign up for this newsletter by contacting her at: renee.schulte@legis.state.ia.us. You can follow her on twitter (twitter.com/reneeschulte), read her blog (reneeschulte.wordpress.com) or watch her website (reneeschulte.org).

infoNET Bill Tracker

The *infoNET* bill tracking system is updated daily with new bills and changes in status. You can check on bills at any time at: www.ialobby.com/CPCBillTracker/tabid/59/Default.aspx?cid=INFONET.

Because it is so late in session, we are only listing the current status of a few key bills that have not yet been sent to the Governor and still have a chance to pass.

HF 2339 & SF 2332 - HCBS Waiver/Intellectual Disabilities (Status: House Floor)

SF 2356 - Health Care Reform & IowaCare Plus (Status: House Floor)

SF 2349 - Autism Insurance Coverage (Status: House Floor)

SF 2235 - LIHEAP/Fuel Deliveries (Status: House Floor)



Action Center

Making contacts with your legislators simple & fast.

Step One. Go to the Action Center (www.infonetiowa.com).

Step Two. Sign in with your email address and zip code. This tells the Action Center who you are. The first time you use this tool, you need to verify your address and name. We need a street address or the system will not work (PO boxes will not work). *You only need to do this once.*

Step Three. You are now in the Action Center. You will be given the choice of advocating on a hot topic, or an issue of your choice. Simply click on your choice.

Step Four. The system automatically finds your elected officials, and addresses and signs your email for you. All you need to do is write your message (sometimes we'll help you get started). Then click "send."

Step Five. You will now have the option of forwarding our Action Center to a friend. This allows friends to use the action center to contact their elected officials.

Speak Out.
Get Involved.
Take Action.



Educate your elected officials about the issues that matter most to you!

[GO](#)

NEW! We're on Facebook!

Get breaking news & talk to other advocates – friend us on Facebook by becoming an *infoNET fan*.

Just search "infonet" at
www.facebook.com

facebook

Upcoming Public Forums

Legislative town hall meetings and public forums are a great place to advocate for you issues. A full list of forums is at: www.infonetiowa.com.

Because of space, we cannot print all of the 200-plus forums planned in the next three months. Below is a list of the communities having forums over the next two weeks – check your local newspaper, call your legislator, or go to www.infonetiowa.com.

NOTE: Legislators are entering the final weeks of session, which means working at the Capitol on Fridays and maybe Saturdays. Please call or email your legislator before going to a forum to make sure they will be there.

Forums are planned in the following communities on:

- ☒ **Friday, March 26** – Osceola
- ☒ **Saturday, March 27** – Aredale, Bettendorf, Breda, Clarinda, Clarksville, Council Bluffs, Decorah, Dumont, Fort Dodge, Greene, Greenfield, Jefferson, LaPorte City, Mount Pleasant, Osage, Oskaloosa, Postville, Rock Rapids, Shenandoah, Sigourney, Sioux City, Spencer, Stacyville, Waukon, Winterset
- ☒ **Saturday, April 3** – Ankeny, Dubuque, Grinnell, Muscatine
- ☒ **Saturday, April 10** – Ames, Carroll, Corning, Creston, Elkhart, Grimes, Johnston, Mt. Ayr, North Liberty, Oskaloosa, Polk City
- ☒ **Saturday, April 17** – Cedar Rapids, Urbandale
- ☒ **Friday, April 23** – Ames
- ☒ **Saturday, April 24** – Bettendorf, Fort Dodge, Jefferson, Mt. Pleasant

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