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THIS WEEK AT THE CAPITOL

Not even the weather could keep people from the Capitol this week. The rotunda was filled daily with people representing grocers, childcare providers, foster parents and children, insurance representatives, counties, domestic violence prevention advocates, anti-smoking groups, and business organizations. On Thursday, legislators hosted a Black History Month celebration with the Des Moines-based dance group "The Isiserettes" and their drum crew.

Needless to say, it's been crowded and loud. Many people ask, "Is it always this loud in here?" The answer is a resounding yes! But this is good – more lowans than ever are exercising their rights and advocating for the things that are important to them.

We hope you can join us at Advocating Change Day 2008 on April 9 and help us fill the rotunda!

You can now register online (www.idaction.org/change_day.html), by calling toll-free (866/432-2846 or 866/432-2847 TTY/TDD) or by emailing (info@idaction.org).

More Retirement News

Another legislator has announced his plans to retire this year. Rep. Phil Wise, a Democrat from Keokuk, announced he will not run for re-election this year. Rep. Wise decided to end his public service this year when he finishes his 13th term in the Iowa Legislature, becoming the 13th member to announce retirement.

Working Together?

It is true that most bills pass out of the House and Senate unanimously. Only a handful of bills are ever truly controversial. That said, it is rare to find a bill with all 100 House members listed as sponsors. This week, the House introduced a bill that will exempt your federal tax rebate (coming sometime this summer) from state income taxes. That means the state will not tax the money you get this year as a part of the plan to get the economy back on track. Normally this money would be taxed as income. The rebate is \$600/person or \$1200/couple, with an additional \$300 per child. Those making over \$150,000 annually will not receive the full rebate, and only people paying taxes will receive the rebate.

Going Up in Smoke

Last year, the Governor successfully passed a tobacco tax increase. Now legislators are considering a stack of bills that will limit where a person can. Some of these bills ban smoking within 50 feet of a school or day care facility, some give cities and counties the ability to adopt local smoking bans, and others put a statewide ban on smoking in all public places.

This week, the House passed the "Smokefree Workplace Act" (HF 2212), making it illegal to smoke in any public place. You will still be able to smoke in casinos, private clubs, your house or car, designated rooms in hotels/motels, and tobacco stores.

Several legislators tried to make the ban apply to casinos, but lost the vote 43-51. The bill itself passed 56-44. The bill's floor manager Rep. Tyler Olson (D-Cedar Rapids) said the bill protects "99% rather than 0%" of lowans.

Opponents of the statewide ban would rather see local control, and say a statewide ban is unfair to small businesses. One opponent noted that if the bill was supposed to be a health care protection bill, it should include casinos. They added that the state was protecting its revenues, not public health. (The state gets a large cut of those gambling dollars.)

Growing Iowa's Silicone Valley

Last year, legislators passed a bill giving Google (the highly successful Internet search engine) special tax breaks to locate one of their "server farms" in Iowa, leading to huge investment and new high-paying technology jobs. This year, legislators are working hard to attract Microsoft, which is building its own server network around the country. Legislators passed HF 2233, which would give Microsoft the same tax breaks given to Google, if they invest \$200 million in Iowa and create new high-wage jobs.

Growing Iowa's economy is important to everyone in the state – because more business means more is paid in taxes, which means more state money is available to spend on important programs like health care reform, MH/MR/DD growth, education, etc.

Bottle Bill Breaks

Governor Culver is ending his push to get legislators to consider his proposed expansion of the state's bottle deposit law. Governor Culver proposed increasing the bottle deposit to ten cents (keeping two cents of it for environmental programs and for retailers, and giving people back only eight cents). There are a few sheltered workshops around the state that process bottle deposits, so this could have increased the amount of money going to them for their work. Governor Culver said, "I understand lowans have concerns about not getting their full deposit back, and I recognize we need to come up with another way to meet our goals while ensuring lowans get their full deposit."

BUDGET TARGETS ANNOUNCED

The biggest news this week was the announcement that leaders had agreed to budget targets. Legislative leaders decide how much money will go to each area of the budget. Legislative leaders set a "target" amount that each budget area can spend.

The budget subcommittees then take that "target" and divide it up among various programs and services. The overall budget target tells the budget subcommittee how much money they are allowed to spend – but the real decisions still rest with them.

The announcement of the budget targets last week means legislators will be getting serious about the budget and start to make decisions. Here is a quick look at the budget targets for the next fiscal year (fiscal year 2009):

Administration & Regulation

Funds things like regulation of nursing homes and care facilities and state agencies like the Dept. of Personnel.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$96,299,857
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$95,604,847
Difference: \$695,000 less

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Funds various agricultural and environmental programs, including funding for state parks.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$43,638,037
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$43,403,037
Difference: \$235,000 less

Economic Development

Funds tourism programs, cultural and arts programs, and workforce programs.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$42,656,535
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$40,836,535
Difference: \$1,820,000 less

Education

Funds community colleges, the three state universities, Braille & Sightsaving School, School for the Deaf, public libraries, and school programs.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$1,182,758,943
(that's over a billion!)
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$1,242,961,558
Difference: \$60,202,615 more

Health & Human Services

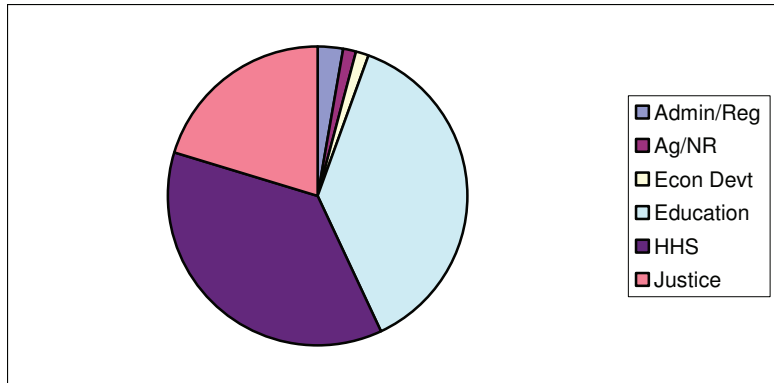
Funds Medicaid, child welfare system, programs for older and aging lowans, services to persons with disabilities, and assistance to low-income families.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$1,169,210,414
(again over \$1 billion!)
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$1,207,615,634
Difference: \$38,405,220 more

Justice System

Funds the state's prisons, community-based corrections, and court system.

Current Budget (FY 2008): \$670,688,353
Budget Target (FY 2009): \$669,739,630
Difference: \$948,723 less



As you can see, education and health/human services remain priorities for the legislators in charge this year (they are the only areas getting increases). But do not get too excited.

While there is an increase over last year's budget, Medicaid will absorb a great deal of that just to keep pace with the growth in demand for services. It does not mean there is a lot of new money to be spent. In fact, we might expect some difficult decisions ahead for legislators even in those areas of increase, because the increase may not be enough to sustain all current commitments.



What does this mean to you?

If you have programs or services you would like to see get more money next year, now is the time to tell your legislators.

Legislators will move programs and services up on their list of priorities after hearing from the people they represent – so make sure you let them know what you would like to see funded (and let us know how it goes):

CALL:

Your Representative: 515-281-3221
Your Senator: 515-281-3371

WRITE:

Senator _____ OR Representative _____
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

DON'T KNOW YOUR LEGISLATOR'S NAME?

1. Call your county auditor (you'll need to know your address).
2. Go online and enter your address here: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/>.
3. If you receive this at a street address (not PO Box), your legislators will be listed on the mailing label at the end of this update.

State Auditor Gives Governor's Budget Mixed Review

Every year, the state auditor reviews the Governor's budget and gives his expert advice on whether it is balanced and based on sound accounting. This year State Auditor David Vaudt (who is an elected official) said "While the Governor's Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal makes significant progress in enhancing clarity, reducing the spending gap, and lowering spending growth, it sets Iowa up for some difficult challenges in the following fiscal year."

Auditor Vaudt cited the Governor's use of special funds to balance the budget as a problem (primarily spending all of the remaining money in the Senior Living Trust Fund), leaving a \$193 million hole in the budget in 2010. He also said that the Governor's use of bonding (borrowing money) to pay for a new prison might mean "taxpayers will pay for decades to come."

Finally, Auditor Vaudt said that the Governor's spending still exceeded the rate of growth in the state – 16% growth in state spending over two years while state revenues are growing only at 12%.

The Budget targets announced previously are 2% under the Governor's recommendation.

HEALTH CARE REFORM MOVES INTO 2ND GEAR

Everyone is talking about ways to reform Iowa's health care system to make sure Iowans have access to care no matter where they live, no matter how much money they make. But most legislators acknowledge it will take time to turn this system around, and the best they can do in a year with little new money is start building the base for a more expansive future reform.

That means things like giving people incentives to live healthier lifestyles, help encourage nurses and mental health professionals to locate in rural areas, encourage the use of telemedicine to fill the gaps in services around the state, begin the process of sharing medical records electronically (and creating a health care

passport for people to use anywhere they go), and establishing a medical home for people that will help the patient and their doctor better manage their care (versus the insurance company managing your care).

All of these components are included in the Affordable Health Care Commission's proposal – and also in the proposal Governor Culver announced this week. Nearly all House Democrats have signed on to the Governor's proposal (45 out of the 53). The Governor's plan also gets rid of pre-existing conditions (insurance companies will have to cover them) and allows young adults to be covered under their parent's health plans until they are 25 or while enrolled in college.

The Governor made his announcement, saying he did not want to wait for Congress to take action. "While I am optimistic we will eventually see some progress...in Washington over the coming years, I believe there are some things we can do at the state level to make it easier for Iowa families to get quality health care." Said Culver. The Governor's proposed budget adds funding to cover 7,500 more children on the state's children's health insurance plan (called hawk-i) and Medicaid.

You can read Governor's Health Care Reform Proposal (SSB 3194) online here:

<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/CoolICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&ga=82&hbill=SSB3194>.

PEOPLE TAKING ACTION

There were a number of people and groups at the Capitol this week taking action on the issues they think are important. We wanted to highlight those this week.

Lobbyist Apprentice Gano Whetstone

ID Action Lobbyist Apprentice Gano Whetstone has been at the Capitol three times already (once on her own) and has been talking to legislators about children's mental health and wellness issues – things she feels passionately about. Here is what she wrote about her experience to date:

I was chosen to be a lobbyist apprentice by the Governor's Disability Council. I have been going to the Capitol, and I have been talking to legislators. I really enjoy voicing my opinion on legislative issues.

I was a crime victim while teaching school in Dixon, Illinois. This left me with a mental illness and disabled. I became concerned with the health and safety of the students as a result of my injuries. I have been asking my legislators to fund children's health care. I want both physical and mental health care coverage. There is a great need to help mental health consumers at school.

I am also talking to my legislators about money to fight stigma. I would like speakers, advocacy groups, and media relations be funded. Their job would be to educate people on mental illness and combat stigma.

My experience as a Lobbyist Apprentice has been exciting and rewarding. Talking to legislators has been a lot of fun. I hope more people will become Lobbyist Apprentices. I want to thank the Governor's Disability Council for the opportunity to advocate for myself and others. It has truly been a great experience!

Parents of Children with Autism Speak Out

Two mothers of children with autism testified before a packed and sympathetic room about the lack of services and supports available to families of children with autism. Dr. Ethel Faust (a medical doctor) and Dr. Danielle Sharp (a dentist) talked to members of the Health & Human Services Budget Subcommittee about the need for an Autism Waiver in Medicaid, as other states have done to address the needs of children with autism. Here is some of what they said:

- The statistics are startling – 1 in every 150 children will be diagnosed with autism (it is more common in boys - 1 in every 94). It is the single fastest growing developmental disability today. Many children with autism have normal IQs but have trouble speaking and relating to others.
- Many children first enter the system with an MR diagnosis – and often begin receiving services funded by the MR waiver. With further testing, they are found to be autistic and are taken off the waiver, with little or no access to funded services. Insurance plans typically do not cover autism.

- Even with the MR diagnosis, children wait for services, delaying the autism diagnosis. There are currently 3,251 people on the combined Medicaid waiver waiting lists, growing by 100 per month with an average 16-20 month wait.
- This presents significant problems, because studies show children with autism can be treated successfully if they receive 20-40 hours of intensive therapy between the ages of 3 and 5. Unfortunately, the average age of diagnosis is four. If that child is on a waiver waiting list, that critical period of success could be missed.
- Studies show that treatment saves money – getting the help a child needs early can save the state more than \$25 million over a child’s lifetime. The cost of such treatment is \$3 million over a lifetime.
- Parents do not often know where to go – the state needs to establish an Autism Resource Center to help coordinate public and private services, while cutting down on duplication of efforts.

DHS Director Kevin Concannon responded to Dr. Faust and Dr. Sharp’s comments, saying that there has been much more convincing evidence over the past several years to support early intervention and diagnosis. He also acknowledged the need to keep these children in their own homes, with their families, and that this concept is “totally consistent with what we as a state have been pursuing.”

Unfortunately, the reality is that the state currently spends \$350 million on waiver services, but the need far outweighs the current funding for waiver services. Director Concannon said the major challenge to doing an autism waiver is money, even though the state spends far more on nursing homes and institutional care. Another challenge is that no one knows what the range of services would be for an autism waiver, since only 6-8 other states have one.



If you would like to see the state put more money into waiver services, clear waiver waiting lists, and/or create a new autism waiver, contact your Representative and Senator. If you wish to go further, you can contact the members of the Health & Human Services Budget – they are:

- Sen. [Jack Hatch](#) (D-es Moines)
- Sen. [David Johnson](#) (R-Ocheyden)
- Sen. [Keith Kreiman](#) (D- Bloomfield)
- Sen. [Amanda Ragan](#) (D -Mason City)

- Sen. [Jim Seymour](#) (R-Woodbine)
- Rep. [Ako Abdul-Samad](#) (D-Des Moines)
- Rep. [Ro Foege](#) (D–Mt. Vernon)
- Rep. [Elesha Gayman](#) (D-Davenport)
- Rep. [Polly Granzow](#) (R-Eldora)
- Rep. [Dave Heaton](#) (R-Mt. Pleasant)
- Rep. [Linda Miller](#) (R-Bettendorf)
- Rep. [Eric Palmer](#) (D-Oskaloosa)
- Rep. [Mark Smith](#) (D-Marshalltown)
- Rep. [Walt Tomenga](#) (R-Johnston)

To call Representatives: 515-281-3221
To call Senators: 515-281-3371

P&A Gives Advocates a Voice

Iowa Protection & Advocacy Services, Inc was at the Capitol this week to help lowans with disabilities tell their stories. Iowa Protection and Advocacy Services is a program that receives federal funds to make sure individuals with disabilities know and exercise their legal rights when it comes to education, employment, and treatment in the least restrictive setting possible.

Iowa P&A (for short) presented some of the things they do for people with disabilities that are caught in the service system bureaucracy and feel their rights have been violated. These stories help legislators understand why more funding is needed for services.

- ★ Mary Carlson came to the Capitol to tell her story as a person who has a dual diagnosis. She told of being berated by providers, being told she didn’t qualify for services, and being told she didn’t understand the system. Mary readily admitted she didn’t know the system – and that is where P&A helped her. They worked with Dallas County to help get her the services she needed.
- ★ Danny came to the Capitol with his mother to testify about how P&A helped him. Danny is a 35-year old from Sac City and gets his services and support through the Howard Activity Center, where he worked at the recycling center for years. Danny, who has Down Syndrome, loves working and wants to continue, despite having the funding for his supported employment and job coach cut. Danny’s mother talked about his long work history – at a grocery store, lumberyard, and nursing home. He loves his jobs making beds at the nursing home where his mother works, and putting together boxes at Cookie’s Barbeque where his dad works.

MH/MR/DD FUNDING UPDATE

- ★ Andy is a person with Down Syndrome, and until recently, received his services through Iowa Central Industries (or ICI) in Fort Dodge, a sheltered workshop. Andy lives in Webster City and asked P&A to help him navigate the system and work with his county CPC to get the services he needs to keep working. When asked by Senator Jack Hatch if he liked working, Andy enthusiastically said, "Yeah. I like the paycheck!" Andy is currently in day care, or what his mother called "a glorified nursing home," instead of working.
- ★ Many people at the Capitol know Jen Harbison as the lobbyist for the Academy of Pediatricians, but that was not why she was presenting to legislators this week. Jen presented on behalf of her family, who became frustrated with "the system" when they had trouble keeping her Aunt Marilyn, who is mentally retarded, in her group home in Webster County. Marilyn lived in group homes since 1991 by choice, and her experience was okay until about 2006. In 2006, Marilyn was involuntarily discharged from her group home, where she had lived for 12 years. With only two months notice, it was difficult for the family to find another place for Marilyn. The provider that discharged her owned all the group homes in the county, and they refused to take her at any of them. P&A helped Jen and her family understand their rights, cut through the red tape, and find out about the new consumer choice option available to Marilyn. Marilyn now lives in Humboldt, rents a home, and has begun her new program. She is still fighting to get more of her services reinstated, but is happy to be living independently in her own home.



Do you have a story to tell?

Contact your legislators & tell it. These stories motivate legislators to action. It is most effective if you can tell your story, then tell your legislators what they can do to help you (more money for services, clearing the waiver waiting list, etc).

To call your Representative: 515-281-3221

To call your Senator: 515-281-3371

Senator _____ OR Representative _____
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

The MH/MR/DD system is underfunded, resulting in counties cutting services or putting people on waiting lists. State waivers are underfunded, resulting in growing waiting lists that mean some people are waiting more than a year for services.

An group of legislators volunteered to help tackle the problem – Sen. Amanda Ragan (D-Mason City), Sen. Joe Bolkcom (D-Iowa City), Sen. David Johnson (R-Ocheyden), Rep. Elesha Gayman (D-Davenport), Rep. Dave Heaton (R-Mt. Pleasant) have been meeting weekly on Wednesday morning to talk about potential solutions that may help take pressure off county budgets, and start to bring some predictability back into the system.

While that sounds easy, it is anything but easy! Legislators heard testimony over the last two weeks from community mental health centers, advocacy groups, and Medicaid. One proposal being considered would have DHS take over a greater share of the county's Medicaid costs for services to persons with mental retardation.

The State currently bills counties \$171.4 million for services provided in MHIs and state resource centers. Counties are responsible for the non-federal share of these services.

However, state funding for the entire MH/MR/DD system only amounts to \$142 million. That leaves counties short about \$30 million, which is funded by county property tax dollars. With county property tax dollars capped, there is simply no way to make up funding except to take it away from 100% county-funded services, like those to non-mandated populations like persons with developmental disabilities.

DHS is proposing to enhance their match for these MR services and pay for all of the growth in those services. They would basically freeze the county's share for those services at \$142 million and fund the rest out of Medicaid. This would be done gradually, about \$8.5 million each year would be shifted over to Medicaid, leaving counties with more room to pay for services to other populations.

While legislators and counties seemed generally supportive of the idea, some consumer advocates were nervous. They expressed concern that the state could institute waiting lists for these services, and felt that consumers would have a better chance getting of

county waiting lists and appealing to their five or seven member county boards of supervisors, rather than the 150-member legislature.

More to come on this, but visit the *infoNET* website for more information at:
www.infonetiowa.com/current_issue/issues_and_policy_briefs.php.

NEW *infoNET* WEBSITE FEATURES

If you have not taken the time to visit our new website, we invite you to at www.infonetiowa.com. We have started posting lots of information about various issues and policies being discussed by the Legislature, including policy papers, talking points, and legislative presentations on our new “Policies & Issues” section.

You can find it all here:
www.infonetiowa.com/current_issue/issues_and_policy_briefs.php.

We are happy to post information on initiatives you are taking action on – just send them to us at info@idaction.org or by mail to PO Box 71369, Des Moines, Iowa 50325 (please put it to the attention of “infoNET”).

Let us know what you think – you can call our comment line at: 866/432-2846 (866/432-2847 TTY/TDD) and choose option 3.

TAKE ACTION! PUBLIC FORUMS LIST

Legislators attend legislative forums that are open to the public on weekends, when they are back in their hometowns. These forums are excellent times to talk to your legislators and ask questions.

Legislators depend on input from the people they are elected to represent – and this is one way to get that valued input. You do not have to talk at these meetings – you can go and listen.

Here is a list of the upcoming forums (next two weeks). A complete list of these forums is online at:
www.infonetiowa.com.

Thursday, February 28, 2008

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. - JEFFERSON

Transportation Town Hall Meeting
Jefferson Community Building, 204 W. Harrison
Sen. Daryl Beall, Sen. Larry Noble, Sen. Tom Rielly & Others

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. – STORM LAKE

Transportation Town Hall Meeting
Sunrise Pointe Golf Course, 1438 Lakeshore Drive
Sen. Steve Kettering, Sen. Larry Noble, Sen. Tom Rielly & Others

Friday, February 29, 2008

8:30 a.m. - EMMETSBURG

Emmetsburg High School, 205 King Street
Rep. Marcella Frevert

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. – SIOUX CITY

Transportation Town Hall Meeting
Sioux City Library, Gleeson Room, 529 Pierce St.
Sen. Steve Warnstadt, Larry Noble, Sen. Tom Rielly

10:00 a.m. - OSAGE

Osage Methodist Church, 819 Main Street
Sen. Amanda Ragan

Noon - 1:00 p.m. – GLENWOOD

Transportation Town Hall Meeting
Visitor’s Center, Glenwood Resource Center
Campus, 110 Main Street
Sen. Hubert Houser, Sen. Larry Noble, Sen. Tom Rielly & Others

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. – OSCEOLA

Transportation Town Hall Meeting
Terrible’s Lakeside Casino, 777 Casino Drive
Sen. Jeff Angelo, Sen. Larry Noble, Sen. Tom Rielly & Others

4:00 p.m. – CEDAR FALLS

AEA 267 Building, 3712 Cedar Heights Drive
Black Hawk County Area Legislators

4:00 p.m. - DOWS

Dows Public Library
Rep. McKinley Bailey

Saturday, March 1, 2008

8:30 – 9:30 a.m. - DENVER

The Rite Spot, 107 S. State Street
Sen. Tom Hancock & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

9:00 a.m. – LEMARS

LeMars Public Library, 46 1st Street SW
Rep. Chuck Soderberg & Sen. Dave Mulder

9:00-11:00 – ALTOONA

Altoona Campus, 1500 8th Street SW
Rep. Geri Huser & Sen. Dennis Black

9:00 a.m. – ANKENY

Neveln Community Resource Center, 406 SW School Street
Rep. Carmine Boal & Sen. Larry Noble

9:00-10:30 – COUNCIL BLUFFS

Council Bluffs Public Library, 400 Willow Avenue
Pottawattamie County Area Legislators

9:00 a.m. - GRINNELL

City Council Chambers, 927 4th Avenue
Rep. Eric Palmer & Sen. Tom Rielly

9:00-10:30 a.m. - MUSCATINE

Muscatine Community College, 152 Colorado
Rep. Tom Sands

9:00 a.m. - OLIN

Selma's Kitchen
Sen. Tom Hancock

9:30 a.m. – DUBUQUE

Diamond Jo's Casino, Riverview Room
Dubuque County legislators

9:30-11:00 - OTTUMWA

Bridgeview Center, 101 Church Street
Sen. Becky Schmitz & Rep. Mary Gaskill

10:00 a.m. - ADEL

ISU Extension Office, Dallas County Fairgrounds, 28059 Fairground Road
Sen. Jerry Behn & Rep. Ralph Watts

10:00 a.m. - CARROLL

Time & Place TBD
Sen. Steve Kettering & Rep. Rod Roberts

10:00 a.m. – Noon - DAVENPORT

St. Ambrose Rogalski Center, Corner of Ripley & West Lombard Streets
Scott County legislators

10:00 a.m. – GREENFIELD

Cornerstone Church, 284 Public Square
Rep. Clel Baudler & Sen. Nancy Boettger

10:00-11:30 - JOHNSTON

Johnston Public Library, 6700 Merle Hay Road
Rep. Walt Tomenga & Sen. Larry Noble

10:00 a.m. - LUZERNE

Luzerne City Hall/Fire Station, 116 E. Iowa Street
Rep. Dawn Pettengill

10:00 a.m. - ONAWA

Onawa Library, 707 Iowa Avenue
Sen. Jim Seymour & Rep. Matt Windschitl

10:00 a.m. – TRIPOLI

Somewhere Else Restaurant
Sen. Bill Heckroth & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

10:00 a.m. - DYERSVILLE

Country Junction, 913 15th Avenue SE
Sen. Tom Hancock

10:30 a.m. - BELMOND

Belmond Public Library, 440 E. Main Street
Rep. McKinley Bailey

10:30 a.m. – ORANGE CITY

Orange City Hall, 125 Central Avenue SW
Rep. Chuck Soderberg & Sen. Dave Mulder

10:30 a.m. – WILLIAMSBURG

Farm Bureau Office, 212 W. State
Rep. Betty DeBoef

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. – READLYN

Readlyn Public Library, 309 Main Street
Sen. Bill Heckroth & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

Noon – ROCK VALLEY

Site TBA (contact Sen. Mulder at 515-281-3371)
Sen. Dave Mulder

1:30 p.m. - CLARION

Clarion Public Library, 302 N. Main Street
Rep. McKinley Bailey

2:00 p.m. - INWOOD

Site TBA (contact Sen. Mulder at 515-281-3371)
Sen. Dave Mulder

Time TBA - HAZELTON

Fontana Park, 1883 125th Street
Sen. Brian Schoenjahn (call 515-281-3371)

Time TBA - WAPELLO

State Bank of Wapello, 306 N. 2nd
Rep. Tom Sands (call 515-281-3221)

Friday, March 7, 2008

10:30 a.m. – LA PORTE CITY

La Porte City Bakery, 309 Main Street
Sen. Brian Schoenjahn

Noon – 1:00 p.m. - JESUP

The Other Half Café, 911 South Street/Hwy 939
Sen. Brian Schoenjahn

1:30 p.m. - FAIRBANK

Fairbank Public Library, 212 Main Street
Sen. Brian Schoenjahn

Saturday, March 8, 2008

8:00 a.m. – WEBSTER CITY

City Council Chambers, 400 Second
Sen. Rich Olive

8:30 a.m. – OELWEIN

Two Brothers Restaurant, 29 S. Frederick
Sen. Bill Heckroth & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

8:30 a.m. - OSKALOOSA

Smokey Row, 109 S. Market
Rep. Eric Palmer

9:00 a.m. – CLINTON

Clinton Chamber of Commerce, 2nd Street
Sen. Roger Stewart, Sen. Frank Wood, Rep. Polly Bukta & Others

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. – SPENCER

Spencer City Council Chambers, 418 2nd Street
Sen. David Johnson, Sen. Jack Kibbie & Others

10:00 a.m. - CLIVE

Clive City Hall, Council Chamber, 1900 NW 114th St.
Sen. Pat Ward, Rep. Dan Clute, Rep. Libby Jacobs

10:00 a.m. – DES MOINES

Northwest Community Center, 5100 Franklin Ave
Rep. Janet Petersen, Rep. Jo Oldson & Others

10:00-11:30 - GRIMES

Grimes Public Library, 200 N. James
Sen. Larry Noble & Rep. Walt Tomenga

NEW! 10:00 a.m. - KEYSTONE

Keystone Public Library, 93 Main Street
Rep. Dawn Pettengill

10:00 a.m. – SIOUX CITY

Sioux City Main Library, 529 Pierce
Woodbury County Legislators

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. – WEST UNION

Tap't Out, 122 S. Vine Street
Sen. Bill Heckroth & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

10:30 a.m. – Noon – LISBON

Lisbon City Hall, 115 N. Washington
Sen. Bob Dvorsky, Rep. Ro Foege & Others

11:30 a.m. – DEWITT

DeWitt Community Center, 822 6th Avenue
Sen. Roger Stewart, Sen. Frank Wood, Rep. Polly Bukta & Others

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. – CLERMONT

Brick City Bar & Grill, 305 Mill Street
Sen. Bill Heckroth & Rep. Andrew Wenthe

IMPORTANT BILLS

Bills Signed Into Law

SF 2054 - MH/MR/DD Funding (Late-Filing Counties) - Counties are required by law to report on how they spent their MH/MR/DD funds by December 1 each year. This bill allows a county (Clayton County) that filed their reports by March 15, 2008 to still be eligible for MH/MR/DD allowed growth. Effective 2/4/2008. *Signed*

House Bills Introduced This Week

There are two types of House bills – House Files (HF) and House Study Bills (HSB). Both are introduced in the Iowa House of Representatives. The only difference is House Files are sponsored by legislators, and House Study Bills are sponsored by committees.

HF 2110 & SF 2187 Accessible Parking

Registration Fee - New bill number will be assigned. Currently, there is a \$60 annual registration fee for multi-purpose vehicles modified for persons with disabilities or used by persons in wheelchairs. This bill makes it apply to any vehicle or station wagon, not just multi-purpose vehicles (trucks, motor homes, ambulances, hearses, motorcycles, motorized bicycles are still not included). *House Floor; Rep. Dandekar (Floor Manager); Not yet assigned*

HF 2222 - Hospitalization of a Minor with Mental

Illness - No longer allows a minor being voluntarily hospitalized for a mental illness to object to the admission. Requires the family of the minor to ask juvenile court to allow the admission if the hospital has found the admission to be inappropriate. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Smith (Chair), Granzow & Palmer*

HF 2225 - Disabled Veteran Vehicle Registration

- Veterans with a service-connected disability rated at 50% or higher will be able to get their motor vehicle registration plates free of charge under this bill. Currently, free registration plates are issued to veterans with serious disabilities who have been given an automobile or other vehicle by the United States government. Veterans with disabilities wanting personalized plates must still pay the personalized plate fee. They may also substitute any of the special plates associated with military service without additional fee. The use of the free registration plates passes to the surviving spouse upon the death of the veteran. *House Transportation Committee; Rep. Swaim (Chair), Mertz & Worthan*

HF 2236, SSB 3173, & HSB 663 Long Term

Health Insurance - Establishes a Consumer Advocate Bureau in the Insurance Commissioner's Office to make sure people are treated fairly by insurance companies. Adds \$60,000 for a Senior Health Insurance Information Program to disseminate educational information and raise public awareness on insurance product choices designed to meet the needs of older Iowans. Includes new definitions and requirements for long-term care policies. The two study bills are the same, but do not include the establishment of a Consumer Advocate Bureau. *House & Senate Commerce Committees; Rep. Jacoby (Chair), Petersen & Struyk; Sen. Heckroth (Chair), Olive & Kettering; Rep. Hoffman (Chair), Oldson & Pettengill*

HF 2251 - Mental Health Patient Advocates

- Requires a legislative interim study committee review the state's mental health patient advocate system. *House Judiciary Committee; Rep. Smith (Chair), Heaton & Lensing*

HF 2252 - Optical Scan Voting - Requires a county use only optical scan voting systems that identify a person using their eye. Appropriates \$6 million to reimburse counties for the purchase of optical scan voting systems. Applies to elections held on or after November 4, 2008. *House State Government Committee; Rep. Gaskill (Chair), Jacobs & T. Taylor*

HF 2254 - Medicaid Copayments - Directs DHS to adopt the following changes to Medicaid programs that require copayments: 1) eliminates copayments for inpatient care at a hospital, nursing home, state mental health institute or any facility where the person receives a personal needs allowance (currently there is no copayment); 2) requires a \$5 copayment for all covered ER services when no

inpatient admission is required (currently there are no copayments for this service); 3) requires the Medicaid eligibility card of a person over 21 years of age include a statement of the copayment charges for office and ER visits; and 4) requires a Medipass program card include information telling the person they must see the doctor whose name is printed on the card, or receive a referral from that doctor to receive any non-emergency care. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Smith (Chair), Ford & Grassley*

HF 2259 - IowaCare Re-Enrollment - Allows a person who was an IowaCare member prior to 7/1/2007, had a family income of less than 100% of the federal poverty level, and missed their premium payment to re-enroll in the program without being required to repay the premiums missed. The premium requirement for this income level was eliminated on 7/1/2007, but it required people to repay any missed premiums before re-enrolling. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Ford (Chair), Foristall & Jacoby*

HF 2260 - County MH/MR/DD Risk Pool

- Changes the date for counties to apply for risk pool funds from January 25 to October 31, and requires the Risk Pool Board make its decisions by December 15 (instead of February 25). Requires payment to counties be by January 1, instead of June 30. These changes help struggling counties get their money faster - which may help avoid cuts in services to people with disabilities. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Heddens (Chair), Heaton & Wessel-Kroeschell*

HF 2264 - Voter Registration Deadline - Makes the deadline for voter registration 11 days before any election (currently voter registration deadlines vary between 11 days and 10 days depending on the election). Iowa still has same day voter registration, but a voter may not receive their voting card if they register after the deadline (but you do not need this card to vote anyway). Effective upon enactment. *House Floor; Rep. Gaskill (Floor Manager)*

HF 2301 - Health Information Technology

- Creates an Iowa Health Information Technology System governed by a seven-member Electronic Health Information Commission consisting of persons with broad experience and vision in health care and health technology, a public member, and someone representing the Governor's office. The Commission is to adopt a statewide health information plan by 1/1/2009, identify and integrate

existing efforts into the plan in order to avoid duplication, work with public and private networks to build a backbone, promote the use of telemedicine, address workforce needs generated by increased use of health information technology, and identify state laws that may be barriers to creating this interoperable network. Requires all health care professionals use a single patient identifier or other mechanism and continuity of care record (health care passport) by 1/1/2010. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. T. Olson (Chair), Smith & Upmeyer*

HF 2319 - Lead Paint Testing/Child Care Homes -

Requires any facility or home used for child care, early care, and preschool programs to be tested for lead paint (if they receive public child care funding). Lead paint exposure in children can cause learning disabilities and mental retardation. Getting rid of lead paint in older homes (homes built before 1979 may have lead paint in them) can help prevent these disabilities. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Ford (Chair), Granzow & Smith*

HF 2324 - Information Technology

Devices/Visual Impairment - Directs the Department of Administrative Services to buy information technology devices that are accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Under this bill, whenever computer or other information technology devices are purchased, they must be accessible to persons who are blind or visually impaired. *House State Government Committee; Rep. Jochum (Chair), Roberts & Wessel-Kroeschell*

HF 2339 - Special Education/Male Student Story

- Requires the Department of Education to conduct a study to determine the reasons there are more boys in special education than girls. *House Education Committee; Not yet assigned*

HF 2371 - Psychiatric Residencies at University

of Iowa - Appropriates \$1.4 million to the University of Iowa to add a minimum of 14 additional psychiatric residency positions. Requires psychiatric residents in these programs practice in the state for a minimum of four years following completion of the program. Requirements for 4 of the positions funded under the bill include that the person practice at one of the state's MHIs for their four year commitment. *House Appropriations Committee; Not yet assigned*

HSB 693 & SSB 3185 Children/Youth Mental

Health Services System - Requires DHS to create a mental health services system for children (0-18

years old) and youth (18-22 years old who met the criteria for "serious emotional disturbance" before they turned 18). Defines what is a "qualifying mental health disorder." The purpose of this new system of care is to improve access for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances and youth with other qualifying mental health disorders to mental health treatment, services, and other support in the least restrictive setting possible so the children and youth can live with their families and remain in their communities. Makes DHS the lead agency for the new system. Uses competitive block grants through existing community mental health centers and other local service providers to assist in the creation of this network. Directs DHS to analyze options for leveraging additional Medicaid options, and engaging local school, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, and health care professionals. Certain services, such as school-based mental health services and the development of mental health assessment capacity based in public schools and clinical settings, are required to be supported through the block grants. The services supported may also include other services such as mobile crisis intervention services and prevention-oriented services. Requires regular reports to the MH/MR/DD/BI Commission and gives the Commission emergency rule making authority to quickly implement rules creating this program. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Wessel-Kroeschell (Chair), Abdul-Samad & Granzow; Sen. Bolkcom (Chair), Ragan & Johnson*

HSB 694 & SSB 3196 Medicaid Recovery from Insurance

- Medicaid is the "payer of last resort," which means it will only pay for services if the person has no other way to pay for it. If a person has insurance, but the insurance company refuses to pay for the service because the person qualifies for Medicaid, Medicaid is required by Federal law to bill that insurance company. This bill enforces this law, and requires insurance companies to give Medicaid a list of the people they insure. This list will be used to determine if person has some other way to pay for services (the person will continue to receive services, the only difference is that DHS will go after the insurance company to recover the costs of providing those services). Requires Medicaid to present claims within three years of service, or within six years of the state bringing suit. *House Human Resources Committee; Rep. Hunter (Chair), Ford & Grassley; Sen. Wood (Chair), Bolkcom & Seymour*

Senate Bills

There are two types of Senate bills – Senate Files (SF) and Senate Study Bills (SSB). Both are introduced in the Iowa Senate. The only difference is Senate Files are sponsored by legislators, and Senate Study Bills are sponsored by committees.

SF 2101 & HF 2214 Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program Transfer - Moves the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program from the Iowa Finance Authority to the Iowa Department of Education. Two years ago it was moved from the Department of Economic Development to the Iowa Finance Authority. This program helps people with disabilities start, maintain, and expand their own business. *House Floor; Rep. Staed (Floor Manager)*

SF 2188 - Time Off for Caucus - Allows a person to take unpaid time off from work to attend a presidential precinct caucus for up to four hours beginning one hour prior to the start of the precinct caucus. The bill contains several details of how a person would go about requesting their time off. *Senate State Government Committee; Sen. Danielson (Chair), Hahn & Kibbie*

SSB 3194 - Governor's Health Care Reform Package - Outlines the Governor's strategy to improve efficiency in the health care system, promote wellness, and increase access. Encourages the use of telemedicine and other information technologies to support health care initiatives. Requires all health care professionals use a patient identifier and continuity of care record (health care passport) by 1/1/2010. Creates the "Keep Iowa Healthy" fund to be used for community wellness initiatives or for distribution to county public health agencies for health care screenings, mental health services, and other county-based services to low-income Iowans. Creates a state income tax checkoff for wellness, allowing people to designate \$1 or more of their tax refunds for wellness initiatives. Requires health insurers to cover an unmarried dependent child of an insured person until they are 25 years old or are no longer a college student. Requires insurance companies offering plans to small employers establish new rating systems for additional groupings to drive down premiums. Prohibits an insurance company from exempting any pre-existing conditions and no longer allows the pre-existing condition waiting period when changing insurance plans. Limits long-term care insurance rate increases to 12% annually, unless the financial condition of the insurer warrants that increase. *Senate Human Resources*

Committee; Sen. Hatch (Chair), Bolkcom, Ragan, Seymour & Johnson

SSB 3216 & HSB 695 Governor's Health & Human Services Budget - This is the Governor's budget recommendation for various health and human services programs, including Medicaid. The Legislature has made the decision to work off last year's budget (instead of the Governor's), so this bill will not move forward. You can review this bill here: <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&ga=82&hbill=SSB3216>. *Senate Appropriations Committee; Sen. Dvorsky (Chair) & Kettering; Not yet assigned*

Resolutions

HJR 2004 - Tobacco Taxes for Health Care/Constitutional Amendment - Proposes an amendment to the Constitution requiring all money coming from the taxes on cigarettes and tobacco be used only for health care. *House Human Resources Committee; Not yet assigned*

HR 10 - Lead Paint Interim - Asks for a study committee over the summer to look at how to fund the removal of lead paint from homes. Lead paint is very toxic to children and is a preventable cause of behavioral and developmental disabilities and mental retardation. Children under the age of six are most at risk. Legislators would study the problem over the summer and fall, and make recommendations to be considered in the 2009 legislative session. *House Administration & Rules Committee; Not yet assigned*

SR 101 & HR 103 Employment of Persons with Disabilities - States that it is a priority of the Legislature to make sure there is a stable and quality direct-support workforce for individuals with disabilities. This resolution makes the following statements: There are more than 115,000 Iowans with developmental disabilities, many of whom depend on the support of their families, communities, providers, and caregivers. Turn-over rates of direct-support workers are 40-75% and high job vacancy rates make it difficult for providers to ensure quality care. Iowans with disabilities that wish to work and live in their own homes, in their own communities, need a reliable and quality support system. *Senate Rules & Administration Committee; Not yet assigned*

Bills Already Reported

Because space is limited, we will print the full descriptions of bills only once. Below is a list of all the bills previously reported with their current status. You can view the entire list of bills online at:

www.infonetiowa.com/current_issue/active_bills.php.

HF 791 - Prosthetic Device Insurance Coverage - (House Commerce Committee)

HF 2014 - Psychiatry Shortage - (House Human Resources Committee)

HF 2031 - Teacher Training/Autism - (House Education Committee)

HF 2033 - Mental Health Parity/Veterans - (House Veterans Affairs Committee)

HF 2056 & HF 2274 - Personal Needs Allowance - (House Human Resources Committee/House Human Resources Committee)

HF 2084 & SF 2086 - Special Hunting Licenses/Persons with Disabilities & Terminally Ill - (House Natural Resources Committee/Senate Floor)

HF 2115 - Cost-Based Reimbursement/Elderly Waiver - (House Human Resources Committee)

HF 2128 - Health Mandates Commission - (House Commerce Committee)

HF 2155 - Medicaid Provider Rate Increase - (House Appropriations Committee)

HF 2157 & SSB 3028 - Civil Rights Filing Deadline - (House Floor/Senate State Government Committee)

HF 2178 - Long Term Care Insurance Standards - (House Commerce Committee)

HF 2182 - Mental Health Advocate Appointments - (House Human Resources Committee)

HSB 564 - Mental Health & Substance Abuse Parity - (House Human Resources Committee)

HSB 589 & HF 2288 - Minority Impact Statements - (House Floor/House State Government Committee)

HSB 626 - Antiepileptic Drug Substitutions - (House Veterans Affairs Committee)

HSB 639 & SSB 3156 - Family Support Subsidy - (House Human Resources Committee/Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 2023 - Utility Replacement Tax/Mental Health Risk Pool - (House Floor)

SF 2030 - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis - (ALS) Study - (Senate Veterans Affairs Committee)

SF 2047 & HF 2117 - Personal Needs Allowance - (Senate Human Resources Committee/House Human Resources Committee)

SF 2056 - Automatic Absentee Ballot - (Senate State Government Committee)

SF 2080 - Healthy Kids Act - (Senate Education Committee)

SF 2089 - Absentee Ballot Applications - (Senate Floor)

SF 2092 & HF 2152 - Dependent Adult Abuse Clean-Up - (House Floor/House Floor)

SF 2111 - Lead Blood Testing/Dental Screening Requirements - (House Education Committee)

SF 2128 - Therapeutic Recreation Board - (Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 2154 & HF 2327 - Vertical Wheelchair Lift Definition - (Senate Floor/House Floor)

SF 2163 & HSB 630 - Emergency Mental Health Crisis Services System - (Senate Floor/House Human Resources Committee)

SSB 3027 - Public Accommodations/Jail & Prison - (Senate State Government Committee)

SSB 3071 & HF 2239 - Education Technical Changes/Special Education - (Senate Education Committee/House Floor)

SSB 3093 & HSB 620 - FBI Gun Checks/Persons Adjudicated Mentally Ill - (Senate Judiciary Committee/House Judiciary Committee)

SSB 3093 & HSB 592 - Whistleblower Complaints - (Senate State Government Committee/House State Government Committee)

SSB 3099 - Transportation Budget - (Governor's Proposal) - (Senate Appropriations Committee)

SSB 3100 - Federal Block Grant Bill - (Senate Appropriations Committee)

SSB 3122 & HSB 667 - Children Adjudicated Mentally Ill - (Senate Judiciary Committee/House Judiciary Committee)

SSB 3140 & HSB 636 - Health Care for All - (Universal Health Care) - (Senate Human Resources Committee/House Human Resources Committee)

SSB 3142 & HSB 627 - Elections/Voter Registration - (Senate State Government Committee/House State Government Committee)

SSB 3153 & HSB 637 - Background Checks/Employees of Care Facilities - (Senate Human Resources Committee/House Human Resources Committee)

April 9, 2008 is Advocating Change Day.
www.idaction.org/change_day.html

infoNET is a publication of the Iowa Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council, and is a part of the ID Action initiative. infoNET is written through a contract with Campbell/Patterson Consulting (info@campbell-patterson.com).

Find more resources online at www.infonetiowa.org.

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