



Capitol Comments

Newsletter from your
Iowa State Representative
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My German Lutheran Meat Feast

I married a Herzberg. The German name Herzberg translates literally into heart-mountain. If you knew my father-in-law, Ermal Herzberg, you know that he was as big as a mountain and had a heart that matched his size. When I married I found out that a huge extended family of German Lutheran farmers came with my wife. This past weekend, I found myself eating with many of those German Lutheran farmers. What a culinary and cultural delight it was.

Saturday night, amidst laughter and good conversation, I ate a huge slab of prime rib at the Page County Cattlemen's Association. At lunch on Sunday, I ate a full fledged German meal center-pieced by a pork loin and a brat at the Clarinda Lutheran School fundraiser. As I looked around at both events I saw members of my wife's extended family, but I saw more...

I saw the descendants of southwest Iowa's settlers. I saw the core of Iowa's agricultural economy – cattle feeders, pork producers, and grain harvesters. I saw hard working, risk taking, rock solid farmers – “mountains” of men and women who still make their living from the bounty of the land they have lived on for generations. I saw publicly reserved, privately generous farmers – “hearts” of faith which reach down deep to support the educational system that has also nurtured them for generations. I saw tax paying small business men and women who support their local communities and institutions through their presence and their presents.

Steak Stimulus

Upon returning to the capitol, I went into a room and heard about the need to improve Iowa's economy. I went into another room and heard about the positive impact of ethanol and Iowa livestock feeding on our rural economy. Then I went into a room where I listened to discussions on how manure runoff from livestock feeding is tainting our water and how odor from livestock feeding is tainting our air. Shortly thereafter, I heard constituents expressing concerns about the burdens of complying with environmental regulations. Finally, I listened to discussions on the public funding of big business in our cities through economic development programs and the federal bailout.

Then it came to me - walking from room to room. Why not use economic development programs to help livestock feeders comply with environmental regulations which would allow us to expand livestock feeding

in rural Iowa *and* contribute to our needed economic rebound? So I sponsored a bill designed to do just that. Helping livestock feeders cover exposed feed lots to reduce or eliminate rain induced runoff of manure, and helping them install lagoons or other waste water treatment systems could go a long way in responding to the issues that impact us all. We are all stake holders in the environmental and economic issues and most of us are “steak eaters” on the edible issue.

Roasting Brats On an Open Fire

I mentioned a new bill at my legislative briefings which would prevent open burning within city limits. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wants to eliminate burning of items that create “particulate matter” in the air, such as garbage, leaves and tree trimmings. Shenandoah’s new municipal incinerator (a combustion device) which will operate under a permit from DNR would not be impacted by the burning ban. There is also a special exemption for tree trimming sites run by local cities and counties. These sites may not burn leaves, grass clippings or other landscape waste, but can burn trees and tree trimmings.

As a camping, backpacking, canoeist, and nature lover, I think of myself as being environmentally sensitive. We re-cycle at home, try to avoid putting chemicals on our lawn, and we compost our leaves. Our yard is full of carbon consuming, oxygen producing shade trees that create an environment that allows us to save energy by only having to run our air conditioner a few days each summer. Along with the trees come an annual pile of branches and twigs. Every other year I burn my sticks. Under the burning ban, I could no longer do so. I inherited Ermal’s chainsaw, but not his pickup. So I will have to borrow yours and haul my sticks to the airport – where they will still get burned. And what about the occasional weenie (or brat) roasts we like to have in the backyard? Does this bill go too far?

“Cabbaging?”

Along with that pork loin, cabbage, in the form of sauerkraut, was part of our German dining experience. During the Civil War a person accused of “cabbaging” was stealing. Some people feel that way about this year’s version of the so-called “Fair Share” legislation. This year, instead of making non-union members pay full union dues, non-union members will have to pay a fee (likely 75-85% of union dues) to the union for services rendered by the union on behalf of employees. Like last year, time will tell how this plays out.

A New Entrée

President Obama wants a more transparent government. To do our part, Iowa House Republicans have announced the launch of a new feature on their website designed to get Iowans’ input for budget savings. Go to www.iowahouserepublicans.com and voice your opinion. This goes along with our commitment to find waste and cost-saving measures in the budget process. It will be a useful tool for the legislature and allows Iowans to participate with their government. We’d like to hear from you!

