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## House of Representatives

State of Iowa  
*Eighty-Third General Assembly*  
STATEHOUSE  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

**COMMITTEES**  
Appropriations  
Economic Growth  
Education  
Labor

**APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**  
Economic Development,  
*Ranking Member*

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In the world of the Iowa Legislature, committee assignments are where a legislator spends a great deal of his or her time. It is where work on legislation begins and a legislator is usually assigned to a committee of his or her interest. Many people were perplexed when I requested to be on the Education Committee as it is not considered a “powerful” committee such as the tax writing Ways and Means Committee, or the business oriented Commerce Committee.

However, I believe that education is one of the most important issues facing Iowa today. Solutions to the economic recession and rising unemployment in Iowa can be directly tied to the decisions the Legislature is making regarding education. Schools need to educate our future workforce for the global economy they are about to enter and ensure that the younger generation of Iowans will be able to weather another economic downturn. If the Legislature fails in this mission, then shame on us.

One of the more important issues the Legislature is responsible for is “allowable growth” funding for K-12 schools. Allowable growth is a complex formula that essentially determines the percentage of funding growth the state will grant in dollars to schools for the fiscal year two years from the current year. The Iowa House passed a bill that designated a 2% growth (based off of Fiscal Year 2010) for our schools in Fiscal Year 2011.

How can the Legislature vote on monies to be spent in 2011 when it is currently facing an \$879 million budget gap on top of these turbulent economic times? The answer that was given was simple. The federal economic stimulus dollars will take the place of state dollars.

I believe this tactic is irresponsible budgeting. The logical compromise in these historic economic times was contained in an amendment we offered that would have had the Legislature delay the vote until the 2010 session. That would be more appropriate when we still don’t know the final cuts for 2009 will be, nor do we know how we are going to pay for 2010.

I strongly believe it is reckless and unfair to attempt to fund our children’s futures in this manner. The central theme that I use in my decision-making with education issues is simple: what is best for our children? And, this is not in the best interest of our children. There needs to be accountability with the Legislature. The recent passage of the allowable growth bill is a one time fix. It puts school administrators, teachers, as well as taxpayers in a bigger hole to dig out of in the future. More importantly, it puts the future education funding of our children in jeopardy.

Peter Cownie (R-West Des Moines), represents District 60 in the Iowa House of Representatives. The district includes most of West Des Moines in Polk County. He can be reached via e-mail at Peter.Cownie@legis.state.ia.us or by phone at 281-3221.