



Nick's News from the
Iowa House of Representatives
 State of Iowa
Eighty-Third General Assembly
 Week 6: Feb. 16-19

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Sixth week of the 83rd General Assembly

Finally, things have picked up here at the capitol. We voted on quite a few bills this week and at this time are scheduled to debate HF333, prevailing wage Friday at 12:00 pm. We were scheduled to start debate on Thursday morning at 9:00 am but did not due to a last minute amendment by the Democrats that did not get drafted right and consequently the Democrats wanted to begin debate after 7:00 pm knowing that debate was to last at least 8 hours! This is the same middle of the night method they employed in the past to pass the collective bargaining that was vetoed by the Governor.

Republicans did not, and do not feel that the best time to debate this issue is in the dead of night, so we fought and succeeded in pushing the debate back to Friday to allow Iowans more time to present their opinions and comments.

A prevailing wage law would require that, for public projects, set wages and benefits are paid by the contractors performing the work. It sounds good because who doesn't want higher wages for everyone. The problem is that it infringes on businesses ability to control their costs and removes their right to determine their own wages and benefits. In many cases the cost of public projects could be increased significantly. This increase in project cost has to be paid by local governments doing the projects, which means higher costs for the taxpayer. It could also mean that fewer projects are completed due to the higher costs.

A specific example that would affect the taxpayers of Marion is the construction of the new Marion Independent School District Middle school which was recently on the ballot and passed with 80%. Brian Bartz, the Director of Business Services for MISD indicated that the district is planning to build the new middle school and also add 6 new science classrooms at the high school with SILO revenue. If prevailing wage was to pass, the district will have to either ask for another ballot measure to increase taxes, or not complete the projects as planned.

This bill does NOT exempt the flood affected areas including Linn County. This means that in this time when we are trying to do as much as we can to rebuild bigger, better and stronger after the floods it will cost the taxpayers even more! This is not what Linn county taxpayers need!

A 2007 Fiscal Note from the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency stated that a prevailing wage law will force the state to hire 17 new employees and cost almost \$1.4 million. The same Fiscal Note estimated that project costs would increase 10 percent to 12 percent increase due to prevailing wage. Prevailing wage laws negative economic impact derives from requiring rates higher than the free market would offer.

If passed, HF 333 would make Iowa the first state to pass such legislation since Minnesota did it in 1973. Since then, 9 states have repealed their respective prevailing wage laws.

The biggest question we need to ask is how does this bill get 80,000 Iowans who have lost their jobs back to work? Forcing businesses to pay higher taxes is not the best way to get this done. If we put Iowa businesses out of work because of higher costs and regulation is not the answer!

Noncontroversial Bills

Earlier this week we also had a handful of other bills that allow a change in the way school districts can dispose of property, change some requirements for bidders at property tax sales, changes for county, private, memorial, city hospitals and health care facilities, administration of pollution and fresh water plants, adding members to the Iowa Workforce development board, changes to the public safety communications interoperability board to include a volunteer fireman, and others. (HF45, HF233, HF280, HF283, HF256, HF260, HF281, SF82, SF108)

For a full text of these bills and any others please visit: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/>. Once you are on the site type in the bill number in the quick find search in the upper right hand corner.



Committee News

Commerce

Consideration HSB 72

**Local Government
(Ranking Member)**

Assignment of Bills

Transportation

Presentation by Iowa State Economists on Gas Tax

Ways and Means

Presentation by Iowa DOT

**General Dardis Delivers
Condition of the Guard Address**

On Wednesday, after 42 years of service, Major General Ron Dardis delivered his sixth and final Condition of the Iowa National Guard Address before he retires from the service this spring.

Currently, more than 5,000 Soldiers and Airmen serving in the Iowa National Guard are combat veterans. Over the last 7 years, nearly 13,000 Soldiers and Airmen have been deployed for combat and combat support duties in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping duties in the Balkans and the Sinai Peninsula and domestic support missions around the United States.

During 2008, 4,000 Soldiers and Airmen were activated in response to the floods of 2008, tornados, and multiple winter storms. The Iowa National Guard has become an operational force according to Maj. Gen. Dardis.

My thanks and appreciation goes out to all who serve our state and country to protect our rights and freedoms.



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HF311 – Mandated Insurance Coverage of Prosthetics

HF 311 was voted on and passed in the house this week with a vote of 64-33. HF 311 requires increased health care benefit coverage for prosthetic devices. This was a tough issue to vote on due to the sensitive nature of the issue. I fully support individuals who have suffered tragedy and I have promised that I will not put burdens and mandates on small businesses especially during this time or economic downturn. Any increased expenses in the current economy could force employers to lay off workers; this is not in the best interest of the citizens of Iowa and does not get our unemployed Iowans back to work. The issue of how much this would cost businesses has not been fully calculated and I thus could not support this bill. HF 311 would only apply to about 22% of Iowans. It would apply to only those that have private coverage or coverage through purchased programs which includes most small business employers and does not extend to those businesses that are self insured. I would urge everyone to become aware of your current insurance coverage and explore options if you feel that your coverage is not substantial enough.

House Approves Constitutional Natural Resources Fund Measure

HJR 1 was passed with a vote of 82-14. HJR 1 is a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Iowa to dedicate a portion of state revenue from any increase in the state sales tax to the state's natural resources. Former Senator Mary Lundy had been instrumental in the original drafting of this legislation and it is an honor to support her vision of sustainable funding for natural resources.

This measure proposes an amendment to the Iowa Constitution that requires the state to devote a portion of a sales tax increase occurring after the amendment is approved to be put into a new fund created in the State Treasury in the amount of 3/8ths of a penny for the benefit of water quality, natural areas, and agricultural soils in this state. The process of adopting an amendment to the Iowa Constitution involves approval of an identical measure by two consecutive General Assemblies and a subsequent majority vote by the Iowa electorate in an election. If HJR 1 is passed by the Senate without amendment, it will be submitted to the state electorate at the general election held in November 2010, for ratification. If approved by the voters it will become an amendment to the Constitution of Iowa.

Capitol Visitors Week 6

It was a really busy week for visitors as well. It was great to see all of you and if you are ever in town come down and see me!



Rep. Wagner w/ Members of the Marion City Council and Chamber



Rep Wagner w/ Students from the Central City High School Get a Grip organization



Rep. Schulte, Several students from Linn County, Rep. Wagner



Rep. Schulte, PAX Foreign Exchange Members, Rep. Wagner