

Under the Golden Dome, Too

Week eight at the Capitol was a week of committee meetings, little debate time, and many visits from interest groups. Next week is the infamous funnel week. It is disappointing that we still have not passed one bill that will grow the economy or put Iowans back to work.

Budget discussions should be center stage, but unfortunately those are going on behind closed doors. So, like you, House Republicans anxiously await the budget proposals. The revenue report, through January, showed revenues running even with the Revenue Estimating Conference estimate of -0.5 percent. In February things took a turn for the worse. Revenue came in at -1.5 percent compared with the previous year and one percent below the latest estimate. Compounding the problem is the fact that tax refunds increased dramatically in February.

Our state and communities are feeling the effects of the slumping economy. In order to head off more trouble, state government needs to cut nonessential spending more than what we have currently seen. I am very concerned about the desire to fund ongoing budgets with one-time stimulus money.

Coupled with the revenue problem, an anti-growth bill (HF 555 which dismantles Right to Work in Iowa) was filed this week. Right-to-Work guarantees that no person can be compelled, as a condition of employment, to join or not to join, nor to pay dues to a labor union. In 1947, the Taft-Hartley amendments to the 1935 National Labor Relations Act affirmed states' right to pass Right-to-Work laws. Iowa has been a Right-to-Work state since 1947, just after the Taft-Hartley amendments were enacted.

Union members counter that they should not have to pay dues which go toward payment to the union for services, while others are "freeloaders". But I'm not sure they intend to use the funds collected to add services, lower dues, or add value. A representative from SEIU told the Des Moines Register that the required fees won't go to cover their costs associated with represented non-union members but instead will go to increased organizing and recruiting. The agent also requested fees be deposited directly into their political action fund. Anyone refusing to pay would be fired from their job.

Current law specifically states "It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, association, labor organization or corporation, or political subdivision, either directly or indirectly, or in any manner or by any means as a prerequisite to or a condition of employment to require any person to pay dues, charges, fees, contributions, fines or assessments to any labor union, labor association or labor organization." Allowing anyone to mandate fees or dues as a condition of employment flies in the face of Iowa's Right to Work law.

House Republicans will continue to focus our attention on good policy that grows the economy, creates jobs and promotes transparency in government. We will also continue to examine every line in the budget to find savings in government.

Thanks to all you have visited the Capitol over the past week. I was honored to have Tanner Johansen, a high school senior from Hampton, spend a day job-shadowing last week. Continue to contact me at 641-281-3221 or linda.upmeyer@legis.state.ia.us