

Iowa Republicans: Real Solutions for Iowa's Families  
*Republicans take the lead on offering bold solutions to Iowa's problems*  
**ISSUE GROUP #4**

Iowa Open Government Initiatives: Making government open, accessible and transparent.

Iowa Republicans are united in support of reforming and opening state government. Government has a responsibility to make public how and where it spends taxpayer dollars. Additionally, Republicans believe government has a responsibility to make certain that information is accurate, easy to understand and delivered regularly.

Government reform cannot wait for another CIETC scandal or film office debacle to happen. It must be done now. Government has become too large too fast and it is time for a set of common sense **Iowa Open Government Initiatives** to solve Iowa problems with Iowa solutions.

Here is what Republicans will do if Iowa voters give us the opportunity:

#### The Iowa Taxpayer Transparency Act

Transparency and accountability are keys to reestablishing citizen trust in government in the wake of so many high profile scandals. The Iowa Taxpayer Transparency Act will provide Iowans with the tools to evaluate the performance of their local and state government.

The legislation would create a publicly available database that would be accessible to taxpayers, at no charge, to review annual revenues and expenditures of state and local governments. In addition, the bill would create a searchable tax rate database that will include the tax rates from every taxing entity, and will contain a geographical tax rate map, as well as an individual tax rate calculator. This feature will provide Iowans with a much-needed tool in learning exactly how they are taxed by state and local governments.

#### **State Budget Database**

Specifically, state departments must disclose inter and intra-departmental transfers and include key details so certain expenditures cannot be hidden under broad descriptions like "miscellaneous spending" or "general administration."

The database, taking into account all confidentiality and privacy concerns, will also include a listing and description of information relating to tax credits claimed for individual income tax, corporate income tax, franchise tax and insurance premiums tax. Legislators and Iowans need to know which tax credits are working and which ones are not.

Republicans also want additional information included regarding the Iowa Power Fund and the Grow Iowa Values Fund. These programs were promoted by their advocates as job-creating entities that would spur economic growth. There is significant doubt as to those claims and Iowans deserve to know exactly how much these programs are spending and where and how many jobs they are creating. All state-issued payments exceeding \$10,000 will be made available. The database will include the recipient's name, address and purpose for which the warrant was issued. This allows Iowans to see exactly where their money is going while preventing waste and fraud.

#### **Local Government Database**

In many places local city and county governments provide far more financial and budget information than the state government. Unfortunately some of that information is essentially pie charts, bar graphs and spreadsheets that simply compare expenditures to revenues. While this information is helpful, it does not tell taxpayers where, why and how their dollars are spent. Initially, every county in

Iowa and towns with a population greater than 10,000 would participate in implementing this database within their current resources.

Each year Iowans pay more than \$4,700 per person in state and local taxes. The implementation of an Iowa transparency website would likely have a limited price tag of under \$40,000. This software is available for no additional taxpayer dollars from the federal government and some states have partnered with private businesses to develop state websites.

In light of the record spending increases over the past three years Iowans must have a clear and concise method to obtain information about spending. By providing these tools Iowans will have the opportunity to be the final check and balance. Iowa Republicans will provide taxpayers with the necessary tools to hold their local and state officials accountable for the delivery of effective and cost-efficient services.<sup>1</sup>[1]

#### Legislative Service Agency Department of Accountability and Analysis

Republicans propose the development of an accountability arm of the Legislative Service Agency. This restructuring of legislative employees will be able to conduct independent program analysis and policy reviews free of political influence from the executive and legislative branches of government.

Florida has the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to help legislators gather information and make decisions based on real data regarding the performance of state programs and departments. In just one calendar year this office saved the taxpayers of Florida \$270 million, and since the creation of the office has found billions of dollars in savings.<sup>2</sup>[2] Currently, the Iowa Legislature is dependent upon the executive branch departments for much of the information it uses to make decisions. An office dedicated to program analysis and policy review that can independently gather information to help legislators perform the vital oversight functions Iowans expect will prove to be a valuable asset in the allocation of taxpayer dollars.

Iowa Republicans have proposed a systematic process wherein EVERY program funded by state government will be sunset (de-authorized) by a certain date unless the Governor and Legislature reauthorize that program. This will force a thorough top-to-bottom review of every existing program funded by state government to determine whether the program is effectively and efficiently meeting the needs for which it was created, or if the need even continues to exist. Part of the responsibility of this office will be this process of gathering information regarding programs and recommending to the legislature if the program should continue. In addition, all of this information will be public to ensure that the public has the same information as their legislator.

Incremental budgeting practices have led to a bloated and expensive state government that is both unsustainable and a drain on Iowa taxpayers. This office will help streamline state spending and state programs in a way that protects taxpayers from excessive state spending and ensures better delivery of state services to those in need.

[1] Iowans for Tax Relief website 10/21/09 <http://www.taxrelief.org/articles/6>

[2] Cost Savings Reports National Conference of State Legislatures website 10/28/09  
<http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=17356>

**Iowa Republicans: Real Solutions for Iowa's Families** is a joint project of the Republican Party of Iowa and the Republican Iowa House and Senate Caucuses. Through this project Iowa Republicans

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will promote a series of bold solutions to the problems facing our state in areas ranging from the budget to education, the environment and energy, family, health care and transparency.

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