



Nick's News from the
Iowa House of Representatives
 State of Iowa
Eighty-Third General Assembly
 Week 9: March 9-12

Nick Wagner
 State Representative HD36
 Address: State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319
 Phone: (515) 281-7479
 E-Mail: nick.wagner@legis.state.ia.us
 Website: www.WagnerforIowa.com

Ninth Week of the 83rd General Assembly

This week is funnel week which means that all bills not falling under the ways and means committee, or passed out of the opposite chamber, were required to be acted upon by their assigned committees. If a bill did not pass out of committee this week then it cannot be considered by the House. This creates a busy schedule for the week as we worked to get many bills through the committees. We also debated a number of bills on the house floor. A list of the bills debated is in the right hand column of this newsletter.

Employee Choice of Doctor Bill May Come to Floor Debate

Tuesday a public hearing was held on HF 530 and was passed out of committee following the public hearing. The bill provides that an employee may select their own doctor by having that doctor on file with the employer. The doctor need not be a specialist or occupational physician, and any referral to such a specialist must be paid for by the employer. Currently employers can choose where to send injured workers since they pay for the care. Employers can send workers directly to the appropriate specialist thus avoiding the cost of the referring doctor. Under the bill, the added step of referrals and the inability of employers to contract for health care will drive up the cost of care and thus raise workers' compensation insurance rates.

This bill attempts to "fix" a system that is not broken and has been in place for 96 years. Employees already have a procedure to request a change of doctor and in the overwhelming majority of cases such requests are granted, however most workers never feel the need to request alternative care. Less than two percent of those treated for work related injuries ever request alternative medical care.

Iowa is ranked third nationally, behind only the District of Columbia and New Hampshire in terms of benefits and even with the high benefit rates Iowa also enjoys very low workers' compensation insurance rates. Iowa ranked 41st highest in total premiums in the 2008 edition of Oregon Workers' Compensation Premium Rate Rankings. In 2007, the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI), the national manager on insurance data, estimated that the elimination of employer directed care in Iowa would increase premiums by up to \$93 million per year.

Iowa's businesses need to be helped and this would create more costs to our small businesses, which is not something they need right now. We want businesses to have the resources to provide more jobs and have the opportunity to grow. It is uncertain if this bill will be debated on the floor this session.

Proposed Reform of Gun Permit Issuance Advances

HF 193 provides changes to the permit application process for carrying a weapon. These changes should bring more clarity and predictability to the process. The legislation approved by the Public Safety committee on Tuesday requires that sheriffs explain why an application was denied or restricted. A sheriff who denies an application is required to provide a written statement of the reasons for the denial or the restriction to the applicant by mail within twenty working days of the filing of the application.

The bill creates a process for those who have had an application denied or restricted to seek a hearing. The applicant can appeal the denial or restriction to an administrative law judge by sending them a copy of the notice from the sheriff along with their rebuttal of the reasons given for the denial or restriction. The administrative law judge's decision will be subject to judicial review. This will give applicants and sheriffs an appeal process in the courts.

The bill also includes language that would prevent domestic abusers from getting permits. The training required for getting a permit is addressed more specifically in the bill than it has been in the past and includes a clause that would grandfather in current permit holders by waiving the requirement for the training program.



Committee News

Commerce

Consideration of
 HSB 85 & HF 339

**Local Government
 (Ranking Member)**

Consideration of HF 480

Transportation

Consideration of
 HF 395 & HF 424 & HSB 55

Ways and Means

No Meetings

Bills Passed:

- HF 216
- HF 332
- HF 450
- HF 468
- HF 469
- HF 475
- HF 478
- HF 496
- HF 618
- SF 98
- SF 197
- SF 270
- SF 319
- SF 328

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.



Nick's News from the
Iowa House of Representatives
State of Iowa
Eighty-Third General Assembly
Week 9: March 9-12

Nick Wagner
State Representative HD36
Address: State Capitol, Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: (515) 281-7479
E-Mail: nick.wagner@legis.state.ia.us
Website: www.WagnerforIowa.com

Governor Releases Bonding Plan

Governor Culver released details on a bonding plan on Thursday morning. His plan proposes to issue \$750 million in bond debt for infrastructure. Projects proposed to be funded include \$250 million for transportation, \$175 million for Iowa Veterans Home and community college construction, \$150 million for disaster relief and public buildings, \$100 million for water quality and waste water and \$75 million for local infrastructure. While I have not seen the details I am skeptical of this proposal as I do not believe that we can continue to try to “buy” our way out of the economic crisis. Bonding only increases our debt and therefore increases the burden on Iowa’s taxpayers. We saw two years of increased spending prior to this year and now it is time to prioritize and fund those items and reduce our spending to a level that is not outpacing revenues. In each of our family’s budget this is what we are required to do and there should be no difference with state government.

Iowa Unemployment Highest level in 20 years

Iowa Workforce Development released unemployment numbers on Wednesday and approximately 80,000 Iowans were without a job in January. This is the highest number of Iowans unemployed in two decades. The legislature passed SF 197 which provides extended unemployment benefits to those that are participating in a qualified training program. It is important that we have a well trained workforce to provide for qualified employees for businesses. This bill will help Iowans get training so that when the economy turns around they are ready to provide employers with well trained employees. There were several amendments to help provide for more accountability in the usage of the funds but they were all defeated. See full text of bill and amendments here:

<http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=Billbook&menu=false&hbill=SF197>

I will continue to offer ideas to help drive Iowa’s economy forward and improve the climate in Iowa for small businesses.

Capitol Visitors

I would like to thank the members of the Linn County Conservation Board (Dan Biechler, Dennis Goemaat) and of 4 Oaks (Jim Ernst, Anne Grunewald, Liz Mathis, and Lisa Pritchard, Dina Dusek) for taking the time to visit the capitol this week to pass along information about their respective organizations.