



Iowa House of Representatives Statehouse News

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Earlier this month the Creighton University Economic Forecasting Group released a survey updating economic indicators for the Midwest. I am happy to report that the indicators for Iowa's economy, now and in the months ahead, look positive.

Despite a downturn in the Midwest as a whole, Iowa's economic indicator rose for the second consecutive month. The Group forecast Iowa's economy to grow well into the fall and unemployment to decline to 3.5% by October. The Group singled-out the trucking industry as a factor in the increase because of our expanding biofuels industry. Overall, Iowa trailed only two (North and South Dakota) of the other eight states included in the Midwest region. Details of the study can be found by clicking [here](#).

We recently witnessed this growth here in District 18 with a business expansion at W.S. Darley and Company in Janesville ([link](#)). I believe these positive indicators are a reflection of the common sense proposals passed by this year's legislature that were good for business and have allowed Iowa's economy to grow. The legislature authorized \$7.1 million for job training at community colleges, including \$2.5 from the Iowa Power Fund for training in advanced manufacturing, information solutions and biosciences, and \$2.5 million for custom training under the Accelerated Career Education (ACE) program. We also increased funding for Iowa's Small Business Development Centers, allowing more resources for new and growing businesses in Iowa. In addition,

the legislature invested \$8 million to assist targeted industries to commercialize products, including development of prototypes and new equipment.

We need to continue to do more to revitalize our rural areas, and I look forward to working with you to move us forward. Please do not hesitate to contact me with your thoughts and ideas on this critical issue affecting northeast Iowa.

Several events have kept me busy in the district over the past several weeks. I was able to visit with many of you (and hopefully give you a bag of popcorn) at the Fayette and Bremer County Fairs. If you are like me, you ate enough fair food to hold you over until next summer – or at least until the State Fair!

I also enjoyed working alongside volunteers in Denver at one of the city's RAGBRAI concession stands. It is always a fun and memorable experience when these thousands of riders roll across Iowa, and Denver did an outstanding job showcasing their community. I always am heartened to see all the community volunteers come together for these big undertakings, and I was happy to help. Finally, thanks to the Fayette County Soil and Conservation Board for asking me to speak at their recent awards banquet and to the Oelwein Rotary for their invite as well. I had a great time at all of these events, and hope to see you in your community soon.

Stanley Named New Energy Director

Governor Chet Culver has named Roya Stanley to be the director of the newly created Office of Renewable Energy. “When making this decision on this critically important appointment, I strongly believed that vast experience in the field was a necessity. Ms. Stanley has 25 years of experience in the field of renewable energy, both in Iowa and on a national level,” Culver noted

For more than 18 year, Ms. Stanley worked for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa state energy office. As the Energy Bureau chief, she led the development of a state program that provided more than \$150 million in energy efficiency project investments in Iowa public facilities resulting in reduced utility bills for tax payers. Stanley also collaborated with several Iowa organizations to develop the Iowa switchgrass initiative, laying the foundation for a cellulosic fuel of the future. She supported the development of Iowa’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which launched Iowa’s successful wind development program. In her last two

years with the DNR, Stanley served as the Administrator for the Waste Management Assistance Division, with the goal of reducing the environmental impact of waste products.

In 2000, Stanley accepted a position with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), in Golden, Colorado, where she led the laboratory’s efforts to provide research and development information to state and local officials and agricultural leaders across the country. Acting as a liaison, she provided timely dissemination of the most current information on renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and policy practices.



As the Director, Roya Stanley will coordinate the administration of the Iowa Power Fund and lead public education about renewable energy, renewable fuels and energy efficiency. In addition, she will pursue new renewable funding from public and private sources and coordinate all existing state and federal grants, programs and poli-

cies having to do with renewable energy, renewable fuels and energy efficiency.

“Iowa’s economy is at a turning point,” Governor Culver said. “Biofuels has been a terrific boon to our economy and without question has made us a leader in the renewable energy industry. We must now ask ourselves ‘what’s next?’ The Iowa Power Fund allows us to answer this by providing the tools to begin researching and developing new forms of renewable energy. A cleaner environment and the jobs of tomorrow are at stake.”

Ms. Stanley said, “being appointed to this important position is an enormous honor, and I look forward to returning to Iowa and working to maintain Iowa’s leadership in the field of renewable energy.”

The Office of Energy Independence and the Iowa Power Fund were created in HF 918 and was part of the Democrat’s Plan for Prosperity.

Watch out for Meat Scam

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is telling consumers to watch out for door-to-door meat sales scams. Even though there are companies that sell food on a door-to-door basis, there are sellers out there that are not legitimate or reputable. These sellers offer money back guarantees but refuse to honor them when a consumer is unhappy.

Reports by Iowans that have purchased the meat have stated that the meat was tough and some even inedible. This has prompted IDALS and the Iowa Attorney General’s Office (AG) to put out a consumer warning.

The AG’s office offers these tips to help consumers:

- Watch out for sellers that come to your door out of the blue telling

you that a buyer in your area couldn’t take the order, so they can offer the product at a lower than normal price. This is a common lie told to trick buyers into thinking they are getting a deal.

- Watch out for claims of prices “per serving.” This is illegal in Iowa and a common trick used to confuse buyers about the real price. Meat must be sold at a price per pound.

• Watch out for claims of “restaurant quality.” “Restaurant quality” is not a recognized meat grade and may indicate that meat is of poor quality.

• By law, any door-to-door seller must give the buyer a three-day right to cancel. Don’t buy from any seller who doesn’t give you oral notice of this right and provide you with two copies of a written notice giving you three business days to cancel for a refund.

Other tips and courses of action to help consumers once a seller

has been to their door, and they suspect fraud:

• Be wary of claims of “guaranteed” refunds.

• Ask the seller to leave written materials so that you can consider the purchase and order on another day. Don’t buy from anyone who refuses to leave written materials and pressures you to buy now.

• Write down license plate numbers and descriptions. This can help law enforcement officials track any scam artists and see if

they are wanted in any other states or localities.

The Iowa Attorney General’s office is fielding calls from individuals or persons with concerns. They can answer questions on the seller’s history of complaints or on scams in the neighborhood. The AG’s number is 515.281.5926. Toll free is 800.777.4590 or check online at:

www.IowaAttorneyGeneral.org.

VA Establishes National Suicide Prevention Hotline

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that a national suicide prevention hotline has been established for veterans. The hotline will ensure veterans with an emotional crisis will have round-the-clock access to trained professionals.

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). VA’s hot line will be staffed by mental health professionals in Canandaigua, N.Y. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely

with local VA mental health providers to help callers.

To operate the national hot line, VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The hot line will put veterans in touch - any time of the day or night, any day of the week, from anywhere in the country - with trained, caring professionals who

can help. The suicide hot line is among several enhancements



to mental health care that the VA has announced this year. In mid-July, the Department’s top mental health professionals convened in the Washington, D.C. area to review the services provided to veterans of the Global War on Terror.

Teacher Pay and Performance Pilot Projects

During the 2007 legislative session, Senate File 277 created two pilot programs so school districts could competitively apply for funding to study teacher pay and performance. The Department of Education is overseeing the process.

As part of the conversation over teacher pay in the State of Iowa, it was agreed that study was needed on career ladders or other pay-for-performance models. Iowa currently ranks 42nd in the nation for teacher pay, and legislators, as

well as Iowans, find that unacceptable.

The purpose of this pilot program is to provide funds to local school districts to research, study, and develop pilots projects designed to identify promising practices related to enhanced teacher compensation career ladder models or pay-for-performance models.

Senate File 277 allocated \$1 million in total funding to the Department. As part of this process, the department will initiate pilot projects with eight districts to study

and design a career ladder program. The bill also provides for the Pay-for-Performance Commission to begin a pilot project with two districts to study and design a pay-for-performance plan.

The applications for the career ladder and pay-for-performance pilot projects are now available on the Department of Education’s website. Deadline for submission of applications is October 1, 2007. Application may be found at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/985/1124/>.

New Federal Child Support Annual Fee to be Imposed

Starting October 1, 2007, the Child Support Recovery Unit will be required to collect \$25 annually on all child support cases in which a collection of \$500 a year or more is received. The federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 requires the new annual fee.

After \$500 is sent to a family that never received public assistance, a \$25 fee will be withheld

from the child support collection. This new annual fee will be in addition to the one-time \$25 fee the Child Support Recovery Unit charges to non-public assistance cases.

Last week the director of the Iowa Department of Human Services called on Congress to repeal the new fee. Director Kevin Concannon stated it "is a very misdi-

rected federal policy that is certainly not family friendly," but it is one that Congress approved, so Iowa has no choice in the matter.

Over the coming weeks, the Iowa Department of Human Services will send out notices to all custodial parents who are subject to the new annual fee. A total of 50,400 letters will be sent out across Iowa.

Vietnam Conflict Bonus Application Available

The Department of Veterans Affairs has adopted administrative rules for the administration of the Vietnam Conflict bonus awards. The rules have been filed emergency, which allowed the rules to go into effect on July 12th. Applications for the bonus are available on the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs' website at: <http://www.iowava.org/>

The 2007 Legislature approved Senate File 578 to take care of some unfinished business as it relates to veterans of the Vietnam conflict. A Vietnam conflict bonus was awarded in 1973, but only to those who had served until 1973. The recognized dates of the Vietnam conflict are February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975. Therefore,

those serving beyond 1973, the date of the bonus payment, did not receive a bonus payment for the additional time served.

This bill creates a Vietnam Conflict Veterans Bonus Fund and appropriates \$500,000 from the veterans trust fund to provide bonuses in fiscal year 2008. The bill establishes a Vietnam Conflict veterans bonus for persons who served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces from July 1, 1973, through May 31, 1975.

Eligible persons may receive \$17.50 for each month that the person was on active duty in the Vietnam service area, not to exceed a total sum of \$500. Persons who served on active duty during the specified period but not in the

Vietnam service area may receive \$12.50 per month, not to exceed \$300. A surviving spouse, child or children, mother, father or person standing in loco parentis, may apply for benefits of any deceased person or person disabled from service-connected causes. They are entitled to the maximum benefit of \$500 for Vietnam service area or \$300 for service not in the Vietnam service area, regardless of the length of service. The maximum compensation a person receives is required to be reduced by the amount of any Vietnam veterans bonus the person received from the state for service prior to July 1, 1973. The bonus payments are exempt from state income taxes.

Tax Credits Available for Employers

The Department of Workforce Development has announced that Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) are still available. The WOTC program provides employers with tax credits of up to \$2,400 for wages paid per employee hired from targeted groups during their first twelve months of employment.

Iowa Workforce Development Director Elisabeth Buck said, "Programs such as the WOTC provide

an incentive for employers to satisfy their workforce needs with traditionally under utilized candidate pools." The Rural Renewal Counties and the Disabled Veterans categories provide benefits for hiring individuals in specific counties as well as disabled veterans. This increases their potential employment options.

Employers may take advantage of the program if they hire 18-24

year olds from a family receiving welfare assistance including food assistance; residents of Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, or Renewal Communities.

The Rural Renewal Counties category allows a tax credit for hiring individuals, age 18-39, in the following Iowa counties: Adair, Adams, Appanoose, Audubon, Butler, Calhoun, Cass, Cherokee, Clay, Clayton, Emmet, Floyd, Franklin,

Fremont, Hancock, Humboldt, Ida, Keokuk, Kossuth, Montgomery, Osceola, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Poweshiek, Sac, Taylor, Union, Wayne, Winnebago and Worth. The Disabled Veteran category

applies to veterans with a service-connected disability and hired within one year of having been released from active duty or unemployed any six of the last twelve months.

In addition, employers may be eligible for credits when hiring individuals with disabilities, ex-felons or Social Security Insurance recipients, regardless of their age.

Commissioner Clarifies Use of Insurance Certificates

On August 7, 2007, Iowa Insurance Commissioner Susan Voss issued a bulletin to insurance companies and agents, clarifying that an insurance certificate does not alter coverage of an approved policy. The commissioner notes that some insurers or agents are being asked to issue preprinted certificate of insurance forms in lieu of providing a full copy of the policy.

These certificates serve as proof of liability insurance and summarize terms of the policy. However, they have language that may amend or alter coverage of the underlying policy.

Commissioner Voss points out that Iowa law requires her office to approve all insurance policies and forms prior to their use in Iowa. If an insurer or agent in any way alters or omits language of a pre-approved policy or form, it may be a violation of the law. Altering or removing language from any pre-printed forms is also prohibited.

The bulleting also requires insurance certificates to include the following statement: *“This certificate of insurance neither affirmatively nor negatively amends, extends, or alters the coverage afforded by (policy number) issued by (insurer) on (date).”*

A similar statement is included on preprinted certificate of insurance forms available from ACORD insurance standards company and the Insurance Services Office (ISO). The Insurance Division will accept ACORD and ISO forms as long as they are not altered to modify terms of the underlying policy.

Iowa law gives the Insurance Commissioner authority over all insurance business transacted in Iowa, and allows the commissioner to take administrative action against any insurer or agent who intentionally misrepresent terms of an insurance contract.

Loans to Aid Water Infrastructure Development

More than \$700,000 in new Planning and Design Loans have been issued to help communities with the costs associated with early stages of developing drinking water and wastewater facilities. The loans are made available through the Iowa Finance Authority’s State Revolving Fund.

The loans have 0% interest for up to three years. Eligible expenses include engineering fees, archaeological surveys, environmental or geological studies and costs related to project plan preparation.

“With the state’s help, these water providers are saving thousands of dollars on water infrastructure development and are passing the savings on to Iowa taxpayers,” said Governor Culver.

Here are the loan recipients:

- Ringgold County, \$420,000 for a waste water project.
- Princeton, \$168,800 for a waste water project.
- Hancock, \$40,000 for a waste water project.

- Alburnett, \$14,500 for a waste water project, and \$12,000 for a drinking water project.

- Coin, \$50,000 for a waste water project.

The Iowa Finance Authority administers the State Revolving Fund in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources. The fund assists communities with the costs of upgrading or construction local wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects.

Emerald Ash Borer Update

Monitoring and detection efforts of the emerald ash borer, a small beetle that is a major threat to Iowa's 70 million ash trees, is a cooperative effort of the State Entomologist within the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs), Iowa State University Extension and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The Legislature appropriated a total of \$75,000 this year for awareness and detection efforts of the emerald ash borer.

DNR has reported that to date, over 250 trap and sentinel trees were established at key campgrounds on Iowa's state, county, and private cooperating sites that

utilize campground registration records. In addition, a total of 100 experimental purple sticky traps were established in cooperation with the cities of Ames, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Iowa City, Sioux City, and Waterloo. Experimental traps are scheduled to be checked on a monthly basis and trap/sentinel trees in the fall.

A cooperative emerald ash borer out-of-state firewood blitz of public and private campgrounds was conducted by staff from the



federal United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), DALs and DNR of campgrounds around the Newton Iowa Raceway in conjunction with the Iowa Indy Corn 250. DNR reports that all campground private owners and campground hosts were aware of emerald ash borer and highly supportive. No out-of-state firewood was found.

To date, no emerald ash borer has been found in Iowa. Increased awareness efforts, in terms of signage and bill boards, are being proposed for the fall season.