

State Representative Andrew Wenthe

Statehouse News

January 31, 2008

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Capitol Comments

It is hard to believe that we have already completed three weeks of the legislative session and have reached an important deadline in the legislative calendar. As of Friday, January 25th, no additional bills can be requested by an individual legislator (with some exceptions). This deadline is unique to the second year of a general assembly, and helps the legislative process move forward by allowing the legislature to focus on bills that have already been drafted and introduced.

Standing committees are now focusing on these introduced bills and work on our committees is in full swing. This week, I heard presentations from Roya Stanley, Director of the Office of Energy Independence, in both the House Agriculture Committee and House Economic Growth Committee. Director Stanley informed us of the work being done to establish the Iowa Power Fund, which focuses on renewable energies and energy independence initiatives. The Power Fund is truly making Iowa an innovator and leader in the bioeconomy.

Also in the Agriculture Committee, Norm Olson of the Iowa Energy Center spoke to us about the possibility of using ammonia as a fuel source. I encourage you to read further about this fascinating presentation later on in the newsletter.

In Natural Resources, DNR Director Rich Leopold shared his 2008 priority list with the committee. Included on this list

is the need for comprehensive and dynamic state water and air plans, sustainable funding for natural resources, and environmental education programming. I am encouraged by Director Leopold's willingness to work with the Natural Resources Committee, as well as the Department of Agriculture and other state agencies to achieve these goals. I know this spirit of cooperation will lead to good work in the future.

Finally, the Education Appropriations Subcommittee, of which I am Vice-Chair, had the opportunity to welcome all three Regents University Presidents and the President of the Board of Regents to our subcommittee this week. One of the accomplishments I am most proud of from last year is the legislature's commitment to funding the Regents at a level which prevents large tuition increases. In fact, tuition at our three state schools went up just 3.2%, the smallest increase in decades. University of Northern Iowa President Ben Allen, University of Iowa President Sally Mason, Iowa State University President Gregory Geoffroy, and Board of Regents President David Miles all expressed their appreciation to the legislature on behalf of Iowa's working families for this commitment to higher education. Despite the snowy weather, I was still lucky enough to have visitors at the Capitol this week. Four students in Oelwein's FFA program dropped by with their in

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Rep. Wenthe with Scott Smalley and students in Oelwein's FFA Program

Instructor Scott Smalley to discuss the important of the FFA and how it is preparing them for their future careers. Students from Hawkeye Community College and Northeast Iowa Community College also came for a visit and we talked about the importance of funding our community colleges. Finally, Cindy Ramer came to Des Moines as an advocate for Iowa's Caregivers Association.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me via email, phone or mail if you have any questions or concerns. I look forward to seeing you around the district soon!



Rep. Wenthe with students from Northeast Iowa Community College

Andrew in the District

- Public Forum at Clermont Library at 9:30am on Saturday, February 2.
- Gavin's Foods Supermarket Sweep in Fayette sponsored by the Fayette County Farm Bureau at 2:00pm on Saturday, February 2.



Rep. Wenthe with students from Hawkeye Community College

Shaken Baby Program

House File 2058 establishes a statewide shaken baby syndrome prevention program within the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). The bill passed the House Human Resources committee this week.

According to Prevent Child Abuse Iowa, from 1995 to 2005, forty five children died as a result of being either shaken or slammed. Twenty eight of these children were less than 1 years old.

The program is designed to educate parents, and persons re-

sponsible for caring for a child, through multimedia and written materials about the dangers to children three years or younger caused by shaken baby syndrome. Specifically, the program will provide alternative techniques for venting anger and frustration.

The IDPH will work with experts in child abuse prevention, child health, and parent education in developing resources and materials for the program. The educational materials will be distributed across Iowa in collaboration with

birth centers, birthing hospitals, family support programs and child care providers. In addition, these organizations and others working with expecting families are encouraged to inform parents and persons about the program, and make program resources and materials available to them.

The bill will now be placed on the House Calendar and is eligible for consideration by the entire House.

Natural Resources Funding

The Legislature’s committee studying ways to provide sustainable funding for Iowa’s natural resources are recommending that the full Legislature ask Iowans to invest in Iowa’s outdoor recreation opportunities by increasing the sales tax 3/8th of 1¢ and protecting that investment by constitutionally insuring it goes for water quality and outdoor recreation. This increase would generate the \$150 million new dollars that is needed to jump start Iowa’s outdoor recreation activities and improve soil and water quality.

Iowa State University economists told committee members that recreation amenities and activities in Iowa generate economic benefits beyond spending impacts. Their conclusion is that more than 27,400 jobs and \$580 million in income are being generated in the Iowa recreation industry. The economic value for the rates of participation in outdoor recreation activities, be it hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, wildlife viewing, hiking, riding, picnicking, or just relaxing, yielded aggregate economic values



exceeding \$1.1 billion annually in Iowa.

The ISU study also noted that recreation opportunities and natural resources are important to retaining and attracting skilled workers in Iowa, especially the younger generation. Quality of life factors are increasingly important considerations in the competition for recruiting and retaining entrepreneurs and skilled workers.

The committee agreed with the study that new investments to improve the environment and add recreation opportunities generates economic benefits to Iowa. The additional \$150 million would fully fund Iowa’s Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program at \$20 million, establish a local conservation partnership program with local governments and

nongovernmental entities, provide watershed protection, lakes restoration, and additional trails.

The committee also urges the Legislature to adopt House File 2080, which provides Iowa landowners with charitable tax credits if they set aside land for preservation and conservation. These credits can be leveraged with Federal tax deductions for charitable contributions in order to protect conservation lands for future generations. Setting aside land for preservation will help prevent soil erosion and protect Iowa’s streams, lakes, and wildlife.

Iowa has 350,000 acres of publicly held lands in a system of state and locally owned parks, forests, and preserves. Lakes and streams represent an additional 324,000 surface acres of water in Iowa’s 132 lakes, 180,000 acres of wetlands, and hundreds of miles of interior rivers. There are also nearly 900 miles of multi-purpose trails in Iowa for biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing

Additional Funding for Mental Health Risk Pool

The House Appropriations Committee approved Senate File 2023, which earmarks unanticipated utility generation tax revenues for the mental health risk pool. The mental health risk pool was established to help counties who have exhausted all or nearly all available resources for mental health services, due to the financial constraints of Iowa law, and to avoid health or safety risks to the public.

Currently, the risk pool has a balance of \$560,000. Senate File

2023 will add an additional \$627,000 in this current fiscal year for the mental health risk pool. This will make \$1,187,000 available. Beginning next year, fiscal year 2009, this legislation will provide \$1.2 million annually to the mental health risk pool for distribution to those counties that are in the most need of mental health funds.

Annually, the amount available to counties from the risk pool for the current fiscal year will depend on the amount unobligated and deposited into the fund as of Febru-

ary 1st. Any funds deposited after this date, as well as any unobligated balance at the end of the fiscal year, remain in the risk pool for use in the following fiscal year.

The bill extends the application deadlines for counties to apply for the risk pool funds. Counties will have until February 25, 2008, to apply for the funds, which are distributed by an independent review board. The board has until March 25 to make final decisions on the distribution. If adequate funds are not available, funds are

prorated among all approved requests.

The bill now goes to the House floor for consideration by the entire House.

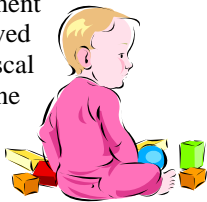
Presentation on Adam Walsh Child Protection Act

Members of the House Judiciary and Public Safety Committees were updated by the Department of Public Safety's Division of Criminal Investigation on details of the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection Act and what states will need to do to come into compliance.

The Adam Walsh Act expands the national sex offender registry, strengthens federal penalties for crimes against children, authorizes new regional Internet crimes against children task forces, creates a National Child Abuse Registry, and requires background checks of adoptive and foster parents. The law does not address the issues of residency restrictions or activity restrictions.

States have until July 27, 2009, or one year after software is available, to implement the law. States are allowed to ask for two one-year extensions. Failure to comply is the loss of 10% of federal Byrne grant moneys, which are used for local law enforcement efforts.

The department said that Iowa received \$4.2 million for fiscal year 2007 in Byrne grant money, so the loss to Iowa would be approximately \$420,000. For the next fiscal year, 2008, Iowa is expected to receive a



67% cut to the Byrne grant for a total of \$1.4 million. This would result in a \$140,000 reduction for noncompliance with the Adam Walsh Act.

Draft federal guidelines to implement the law were released on May 17, 2007. The public comment period has closed, but Iowa is still waiting on the final guidelines. These guidelines will provide the minimum standards states will need to meet to come into compliance. States are allowed to be more stringent.

Sex Offender Registry

Iowa currently has a state sex offender registry. The Adam Walsh Act provides for a uniform national sex offender registry. Currently, all 50 states are linked to a public registry, but the registries are dissimilar. The Act also prohibits states from waiving juveniles from registration requirements.

The Adam Walsh Act provides for a three-tier level for registration requirements based on the offense. For the lowest offenses, the offenders would stay on the registry for 15 years and must appear annually to update their information. Second tiered offenses require a 25 year registration and six month updates. For the most heinous crimes, lifetime registration is re-

quired and updates every three months.

Currently, Iowa requires sex offenders to remain on the sex offender registry for 10 years. For the most heinous crimes, Iowa requires a lifetime registration.

Information required for a national sex offender registry would include where the offender resides; is an employee, or is a student; their name and any alias used; internet identifiers and addresses; telephone numbers; social security numbers; and physical addresses. Homeless people will have to provide the location on the street, where they station themselves, shelters where they circulate or places where they frequent.

Offenders would also be required to provide information on temporary lodging situations, places where they stay seven or more days, and copies of all travel and immigration documents. They would have to provide where they work and any professional licenses. Current photographs are required, as are finger and palm prints, a DNA profile, and a copy of their driver's license. They would also be required to provide license plate numbers and vehicle descriptions, including any watercraft or aircraft they own or operate.

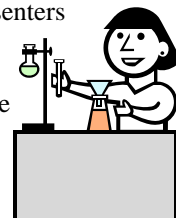
Females Under-Represented in Math and Science

The House Education Committee heard a presentation on Monday from the new head of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW), Rachel Scott.

ICSW presented a panel of speakers that included Christine

Brus, the Director of Women in Science and Engineering at the University of Iowa; Karen Zunkel, Director of Program for Women in Science and Engineering at Iowa State University; and Christa Addy, Business Systems Consultant at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage.

The presenters each gave their perspective as to why women are not currently in the fields of science, technology,



engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and how policymakers, communities, businesses, and education can encourage more participation by women.

Right now it is evident that there is an overall gender gap by looking at areas such as salaries, enrollments in STEM programs, and selected occupations. Women on average make only 65% of what a man makes and more often select traditional occupations. Women in Iowa make up about 57% of college enrollment, but only participate in STEM programs at a rate of 17%.

ICSW gave several reasons that influence women in STEM areas: student behavior, attitudes and aspirations, academic preparation, pre-college education (curriculum/instruction, teachers and counselors, learning opportunities), family and environmental support, role models, and post secondary factors (structure and commitment,

academic and social climate, and special programs).

There is also a possible stereotype in society that is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If people say, “girls are not good at math,” then girls start to believe they are not good at math. This perpetuates the social stigma of the STEM climate.

ICSW believes that women and girls provide the greatest opportunity to meet the STEM worker shortage. They support STEM legislation and appropriations as well as these recommendations:

- Include gender accountability measures (such as requiring grantees to have credible equity plans)
- Include proactive and ambitious targeted initiatives within “marketing” funds for STEM
- Build upon success of existing programs and/or research focused on women in STEM

- Provide opportunities for girls and women to belong to STEM “communities”

A list of questions was included in the presentation for legislators to ask themselves when issues arise related to STEM or science/math education:

- How will this legislation encourage the involvement of women into STEM?
- Could this legislation do more to increase the involvement of women in STEM?
- Are there opportunities for the initiative to collaborate with others working on women in STEM issues?

For more information on ICSW or women in STEM, contact Rachel Scott at 515-281-4461 or visit their website at <http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/sw/index.html>.

Top Experts on Race and Incarceration Visit Capitol

Two leading experts on the link between race and prison incarceration rates educated House and Senate leaders on the disproportionate percentage of minorities imprisoned in Iowa. Garland Hunt, chairman of the Georgia Parole Board, discussed Georgia’s initiatives to reintegrate past offenders into society and reduce recidivism. Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project, detailed discrepancies in the incarceration rates of minorities both nationally and in Iowa. Both experts were hosted at the Legislature by Representative Wayne Ford.

Chairman Hunt focused on Georgia’s efforts to curb recidivism of former inmates. He noted that the average Georgia parolee is 34, black, single, and male. He said in Georgia the population is 30% African American but the prison population is 62% African American. Chairman Hunt stated that the

two most important elements to assure recently released inmates succeed are employment and stable housing. Chairman Hunt detailed a Georgia program that provides \$600 per month, for up to 3 months, for recently released inmates designed to procure stable housing.

Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project, focused on the incarceration rates of African Americans compared to Caucasians in Iowa. Mr. Mauer noted that African Americans are 13 times more likely to be incarcerated in Iowa; Iowa’s ratio is the worst in the country. Mr. Mauer discussed some of the reasons for this disparity, including a lack of access to resources, the likelihood that these ratios were exacerbated at the margins, and that the increasing length of sentences was intensifying the disparity.

Mr. Mauer said one of the most effective ways to mitigate incarceration rates, especially minorities, is to focus on early prevention programs. Mr. Mauer stated that research has shown prevention programs from the pre-school to high school level for at-risk students have been shown to be cost effective. Mr. Mauer also stated that studies have shown that every \$1 of drug prevention funding results in \$7 of benefit.



Finally, Mr. Mauer said focusing on reintegration into society after release from prison is effective, citing research that shows that once former prisoners are crime free for 7 years their rate of recidivism drops to nearly the same rate as for a non-offender.

Iowa Energy Center Suggests Ammonia as Fuel

The House Agriculture Committee heard a presentation by Norm Olson from the Iowa Energy Center at Iowa State University. He discussed uses of ammonia and benefits to the economy.

Olson called ammonia the “perfect transportation fuel.” It can be produced from any new raw energy source, is cost effective, has storage and delivery systems already in place, is environmentally friendly, and can be used in any prime mover. Recently researchers in Michigan built a car that ran on ammonia and drove it all the way to California.

If the U.S. moved to the utilization of ammonia, it could reduce our foreign energy dependence. It could also eliminate petroleum imports, provide a bridge to renewable energy, protect the environment, create jobs, and eliminate ammonia imports.

The economic impacts of ammonia are high as well. There could potentially be 1,250 plants across the United States that produce 65,000 tons of ammonia per year, and create 375,000 new jobs. This would also add value to the economy through taxes and spending.

Right now, ammonia is delivered through various systems. The pipeline system is well set up and very easy to use. There are over 800 retail outlets currently in existence, just in Iowa. Other mechanisms of storage and transport include tanks, rail, barge, cargo, and trucks.

Five end use applications can be used right now. They are spark-ignition internal combustion engines with ethanol, diesel engines with biodiesel, direct ammonia fuel cells, gas turbines, and gas burners. Anhydrous ammonia is directly

applied into soil as fertilizer where it combines with the soil moisture.

In a health and safety assessment, ammonia proved to be safer than gas and propane. It has been used to make methamphetamine, but meth can be made without ammonia. Ammonia actually can be used to clean up fossil fuel emissions.

Ammonia creates no greenhouse gas emissions. It can be made using electricity and water. Ammonia is currently made from fossil fuels, but in the future could be made from renewable sources. It also could help us meet the federal 2015 freedom car targets.

For more information on the Iowa Energy Center or ammonia use, visit their website at www.energy.iastate.edu.

DOT Discusses TIME 21 Study

Iowa Department of Transportation Director Nancy Richardson addressed the Transportation, Infrastructure and Capitals Subcommittee on the Transportation Investment Moves the Economy in the 21st Century (TIME 21) study. The TIME 21 study undertook a legislative directive to investigate road funding in Iowa and found a \$200 million shortfall annually in road based funding.

Director Richardson stated the goal of the Legislature’s interim committee on TIME 21 was to determine ways to overcome the \$200 million shortfall within three years. The interim committee determined that all funding sources, save for an

increase in Iowa’s fuel tax, should be considered to overcome the shortfall. Richardson also relayed that the interim committee believed that the use tax should become constitutionally protected so that any funding from that mechanism would be used solely for transportation projects. Finally, the interim committee sought additional information on whether general fund dollars could be used for road and bridge funding in times of emergency.

Richardson noted that the TIME 21 Interim Committee only focused on road funding because the legislative directive limited the scope of the committee to that area.

She maintained that the DOT is a multi-modal organization, noting that a large percentage of the DOT’s operations budget is spent on modes other than roadways.

Finally, Director Richardson stressed that good roads are good for the environment. She pointed out that adding lanes, expanding the use of turn lanes, and other similar projects to improve the quality of the roads assure fuel is used efficiently. Richardson said roads are not emitting greenhouse gases. We need to focus on the vehicles that are on the roads to solve the greenhouse gas problem.

Septic Tank Inspection Bill Passes Committee

The House Environmental Protection Committee passed Senate File 261 this week. This bill requires that private sewage disposal systems be inspected before the property is sold or transferred. Currently, in Iowa, at least 21 counties have adopted this requirement.

At the time of inspection, any septic tank, as part of the sewage disposal system, must be opened and have the contents pumped out and disposed. However, the owner may provide evidence that the septic tank was pumped out within the previous year. The previous inspection must have been completed by a commercial septic tank cleaner licensed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In addition, the evidence of the inspection must include documentation of the size and condition of the tank and its components at time of the previous inspection.

If a system is failing to guarantee effective wastewater treatment or is generally working improperly, the system must be renovated to meet the current construction standards, as adopted by DNR. The renovations will be paid for by the seller or by the buyer and must be done in a reasonable amount of time. A system that is properly treating the wastewater and not creating an unsanitary condition in the environment at the time of inspection is not required to meet current construction standards.

After the inspection, the DNR inspection form and any related reports must be submitted to the county for enforcement of any mandatory follow up system improvements, and to DNR to be kept for record. An inspection is valid for a two year time period for any ownership transfers during that time.

The county recorder cannot record a deed or any other property

transfer or conveyance document until a certified inspector's report is provided, which documents the current condition of the system and whether any modifications are required to conform to the standards adopted by DNR. Alternately, the deed can not be recorded until the buyer has implemented and submitted a binding agreement with the county board of health to conduct a certified inspection of the system at the earliest time and to be responsible for any modifications necessary as identified by the certified inspector. This would only be due to weather or other temporary physical conditions that would prevent the certified inspection from being conducted.

Senate File 261 is now on the House Calendar and is ready to be considered by the Iowa House. If passed, the bill takes effect on July 1, 2009.

Presentation on Iowa Communications Network

John Gillispie, Department of Administrative Services' Chief Operating Officer for the Information Technology Enterprise (ITE), spoke to the Infrastructure, Transportation and Capitals Subcommittee on the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) and the Return on Investment (ROI) Program.

Mr. Gillispie said there are two major projects that require replacement of equipment. First, the Capitol complex telephone equipment is running on hardware that is no longer supported by the manu-

facturer and parts are increasingly difficult to find. This replacement project is two-thirds complete. Second, the Internet Services Technology equipment needs to be upgraded. This is due to a greater use of video applications for education as well as government and other medical services moving to Internet Protocol-based technology. New equipment will allow for greater capabilities by these users.

The three phase Capitol Complex project will insure redundancy in the system in the event of a dis-

aster. The redundancy will extend to fiber, voice and a secondary entrance facility.

The ROI Program provides funds from the Pooled Technology Fund. Applications are accepted from any agency for information technology projects that demonstrate a positive return on investment. Projects are scored based on project description, expected results, and financial analysis, with bonus points awarded for multi-agency or cross-boundary projects.

Honey Creek Resort State Park Update

The joint House and Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee were provided an update on Honey Creek Resort State Park, Iowa's first destination park.

Terry Montgomery, project manager for the Department of Natural Resources, told legislators that the park is set to open mid-August, 2008. He noted they are trying to make this a very successful park, a tourist destination. They have hired a hotel manager, Central Management Group from St. Cloud Minnesota, who also runs the water park near Cabala's, among other hotels. A golf superintendent is also hired.

He noted a flurry of activities is underway to get the resort open by the end of this summer. The construction company contracted to do the work is putting in fifteen-hour work days, six days a week, to build the lodge, hotel, restaurant, water park, and conference center.

Masons are beginning the block and brick work on the massive stone fireplace that will be the centerpiece of the main lodge.

Lawmakers were concerned about the additional \$8 million requested by the department. Mr. Montgomery said this money is needed to build the 28 family cabins and activity center, which will provide the necessary revenue to pay off the bonds issued to build the project. The Legislature had authorized \$28 million in revenue generating bonds to build the resort. The first bond payment needs to be paid in June, 2009.

Due to costs coming in higher than projected, the department had to delay constructing the cabins and activity center. They assured lawmakers that the \$8 million would finish the park.

The total cost of the resort is estimated at \$51 million. Besides the \$28 million in revenue bonds and state appropriations, the project



includes over \$4 million in local matching money from Appanoose and Monroe counties, Rathbun Regional Water Authority, Chariton Valley Electrical Cooperative, Iowa Telecom, and a private funds campaign drive.

The new resort, located on the shore of Rathbun Lake in southern Iowa, will include a 105-room lodge, indoor water park with lazy river and slides, conference center, restaurant and lounge, marina, boat ramp, 18-hole golf course, cabins, activity center, beach, fishing and boating opportunities, and 9.7 miles of multi-purpose trails for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing.

Underground Railroad Explored February 3

The Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs will take visitors back in time on Sunday, February 3, when it hosts a presentation about the George Hitchcock House, an Underground Railroad site at Lewis, Iowa. The presentation will be at 2:00 pm at the Western Historic Trails Center. The presentation is free and open to the public.

The Hitchcock House was declared a National Landmark in 2006. The home of Reverend George B. Hitchcock was a welcome respite for runaway slaves and abolitionists who traveled through the state. A minister of the Congregational Church, Hitchcock was an ardent abolitionist and an agent for the Underground Railroad. Settling in Lewis in the mid-

1850s, Hitchcock built a log cabin where he lived until the completion of his stone house around 1856. From this house, Hitchcock carried out his Underground Railroad activities, providing shelter to fugitive slaves on their way north.

An ardent abolitionist virtually his entire adult life, Hitchcock died in 1872 in Kansas. His home in Iowa stands as a testament to his role in the antislavery movement and his involvement in the Underground Railroad.

The George B. Hitchcock House is located 1.5 miles west of Lewis, on Nishna Valley Road, south of U.S. Highway 6. It is open for tours 1-5 p.m. May-September, and is closed on Mon-

days. Visit www.hitchcock.org or more information.

Other surviving buildings associated with the Underground Railroad activities in Iowa include the Todd House in Tabor, the Henderson Lewelling House in Salem, and the Jordan House in West Des Moines.