



# Representative Andrew Wenthe

## Statehouse News

March 6, 2008

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### Capitol Comments

The first legislative funnel of the 2008 session has come and gone after a frenzied week in the Statehouse. As I have explained previously, today marks the final day a bill originating in the House can pass out of a House committee and be considered on the floor this year. From here until the end of this session, the committees I serve on, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Economic Growth, will only consider bills that originated in and were passed by the Senate. The Appropriations committee, on which I also serve, is exempt from this funnel deadline.

Funnel week creates a tense atmosphere as legislators and lobbyists make their final push to see that bills they are working on clear this first legislative hurdle. Over 1,000 bills were drafted this year for legislators, and a lot of time and effort goes into the process of creating these pieces of legislation. It is sometimes disappointing for an individual to see their work not result in a bill that becomes law. However, these funnel weeks are important because they keep the legislative process moving and forces both the Senate and House to concentrate on bills with a realistic chance of passage.

Personally, I am pleased that one of the bills becoming “funnel-proof” this week is legislation I have been working on since last summer. The bill modifies a child custody order during the time a parent is serving active duty. After speaking with individuals in my district

who had faced difficult custody challenges as service members, it became clear that some changes to our current Iowa Code were necessary. The legislation I worked on has a companion bill in the Senate, SF 2214, which has passed out of committee and should be arriving in the House soon for consideration.

Here are a few of the bills that stayed alive and will be eligible for consideration on the House or Senate floor:

- Health Care Reform – including expanding the number of children covered by health care, allowing parents to cover their children until age 25 on private insurance, and covering pre-existing conditions when switching from group to individual insurance
- Smoking ban in bars and restaurants and other public places
- Strengthening education standards through a state-wide model core curriculum for all schools
- Cracking down on corporate CEO's with fines and jail time for accepting fraudulent identification and exploiting illegal immigrants
- Protecting homeowners from abuses by mortgage foreclosure consultants
- Protecting patient safety by protecting health care professionals who notify officials of health and safety regulation

- Preventing meth manufacturers from going from one pharmacy to another to get pseudoephedrine products
- Making insurance companies provide mental health coverage for veterans
- Cracking down on internet predators of children
- Creating a study to reduce odor from livestock operations, especially hog confinement facilities
- Protecting our surface waters including lakes and rivers
- Improving energy efficiency in Iowa
- Fixing up our roads and bridges to ensure safety and spur economic development

schools are able to adequately fund their infrastructure needs.

The calls coming into my district are being generated by a special interest group. Based on conversations I have had with several constituents who have received these calls, I would like to clarify my reasons for supporting this bill. In contrast to the information being conveyed, this bill will provide additional dollars for rural school districts and will also likely result in property tax relief for the communities of House District 18. While we have some work yet to do on this legislation, I am confident that supporting HF 2066 is in the best interest of those I represent.

are important to people, and I encourage you all to come to my forums this weekend.



**Rep. Wenthe with members of the Business Professionals of America. Rep. Wenthe gave the keynote address at the BPA State Conference this week.**

Finally, I had several visitors to the Capitol this week. Members representing the Rural Iowa Independent Telephone Associations (RIITA) in Hawkeye, Oran, Readlyn and Dunkerton were in town for their annual convention. I always enjoy visiting with these folks about issues affecting their industry. Jason Strub, an old college roommate and current 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Janesville Elementary, also stopped by for a visit.

**Andrew in the District**

Saturday

- Public Forum at 8:30am at Two Brothers Restaurant in Oelwein
- Fayette County Childhood Fair at 9:20am in Oelwein
- Public Forum at 10:15am at Tap't Out in West Union
- Public Forum at 12:30pm at Brick City Bar and Grill in Clermont

Sunday

- Firemen's Omelet Breakfast at 8am at the Hawkeye Community Hall
- Cooking at 10am for the Bremer County Omelet Brunch at the Waverly County Fairgrounds



**Rep. Wenthe with Mary Olson of West Union and others advocating with the Healthy Families Project**

I want to thank those of you who attended my forums last weekend in Denver, Tripoli and Readlyn. Senator Heckroth and I were pleased to engage in lively discussion with attendees on a variety of subjects, including education standards, school support staff pay, the local option sales tax, the marriage amendment, smoking bans, water quality, the bottle bill, textbook costs, mandatory minimum sentences, library funding, school board elections, infrastructure funding, and much more. These forums are helpful to me in knowing what issues



**Rep. Wenthe with House page Nicole Lenius of Tripoli.**

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!

Over the past two weeks I have received many calls and emails opposing HF 2066, a bill making the local option sales tax for school infrastructure a state wide tax, another bill that is funnel proof. This legislation would more equitably distribute sales tax generated in all of Iowa's 99 counties so that rural

# House Care Bill Passes Committee

On a unanimous bi-partisan vote of 19-0, the House Human Resources Committee approved a bill that provides needed health care reforms. House Study Bill 757 is based on the recommendations of the Legislative Commission on Affordable Health Care Plans for Small Businesses and Families and a proposal from Governor Chet Culver. During the interim last summer and fall, the Commission met monthly across Iowa. The Commission was charged with reviewing, analyzing, and making recommendations to the Legislature relating to the affordability of health care for Iowans.

House Study Bill 757 states that, as funding becomes available, it is the intent of the General Assembly that all Iowans will have health care coverage, with the initial priority of providing health care coverage for all children by December 31, 2010. To get there, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to expand *hawk-i* to cover children up to 300% of the federal poverty level.

The Electronic Health Information Advisory Council is created as a public and private effort to promote the adoption and use of health information technology in Iowa. The Advisory Council will make recommendations to the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) to improve health care quality, increase patient safety, reduce health care costs, enhance public health, and empower individuals and health care profession-

als with real time medical information.

The Department of Elder Affairs is to work with statewide organizations and health care professionals to develop educational and patient centered information on end of life care for terminally ill patients and health care professionals.

The bill requires that insurance companies allow children to be covered up to the age of 25, or so long as the dependent child maintains full-time status as a student in a post-secondary educational institution. In addition, individuals who move from a group insurance policy to an individual insurance policy will not be denied or underwritten due to preexisting conditions.

A Medical Home Advisory Council is established within the Iowa Department of Public Health. The purpose of a patient centered medical home is to provide for the coordination and integration of care, focused on prevention, wellness, and chronic care management. In addition, using a patient centered medical home should lower costs and improve quality through documentation and outcome-based results. Providers that are certified patient centered medical homes will receive incentives for their continued participation.

The Director of the Iowa Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Prevention and Chronic Care Management Advisory Council, is required to develop a state initiative for prevention and chronic care management. The director may accept grants and donations and is required to apply for

any federal, state, or private grants available to fund the initiative.

The Family Opportunity Act, which was passed last year, is amended to say that it will be implemented when DHS determines that sufficient funding is available. The Family Opportunity Act allows an individual who is less than 19 years old, and who meets the Supplemental Security Income program rules for disability requirements, to be eligible for assistance, provided on a phased-in basis based upon the age of the individual.

A Medicaid Quality Improvement Council is also established. The Council will evaluate the clinical outcomes and satisfaction of consumers and providers within Medicaid.

The IDPH will establish a grant program to energize local communities to promote healthy lifestyles that will lead collectively, community by community, to a healthier Iowa.

A Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition is established consisting of 12 members appointed by the Governor. The Council will assist in implementation of a statewide comprehensive plan to increase physical activity, improve physical fitness, improve nutrition, and promote healthy behaviors.

House Study Bill 757 will now move to the House Calendar and be eligible for debate by the Iowa House.

# School Attendance Age Raised

The House Education Committee passed House File 2144, the

compulsory school attendance age bill, which will raise the age a child

is required to go to school from 16

to 17 years old. It received bi-partisan support.

The main purpose of this proposal is to create a higher expectation for students, parents, teachers, and schools. There is very clear research that the first step in changing behavior is the ability to create a higher expectation for that behavior. This is what the bill does.

In Iowa, approximately 800 to 1100 students drop out each year, with a disproportionate number in lower socio-economic and racial subgroups. House File 2144 will require a student to stay in school through the year in which the child turns 17 years of age.

The bill would exempt students receiving competent private instruction, which is usually a student who is receiving home school

instruction or an alternative programming. A student receiving competent private instruction still must stay in school until sixteen.

Approximately twenty-six states currently allow students to drop out at the age of 16, and the remaining states do not allow dropping out until 17 or 18 years old. Several other states have also changed their laws to increase their drop out age.

In Iowa, most businesses expect a worker to have a high school diploma when entering the workforce. With the looming workforce shortage and increasing globalization of the market, increasing education requirements will make sure more workers meet business expectations.

A child who decides to drop out of school will be required to participate in an exit interview. A form will also be sent to a parent or guardian with the requirement that it be returned to the school district. The form and interview will include open-ended questions as to the reasons that a child drops out.

All the data will be turned over to the department of education to identify how to meet the needs of the students so they do not drop out. A working group is required to be formed at the local level to address the needs of the specific district.

House File 2144 must now receive approval from the entire House before moving to the Senate for consideration.

## Bottle Bill Passes Committee

This week, Governor Culver's proposal to change the beverage deposit law, House Study Bill 734, passed the House Environmental Protection Committee. The bill does not increase the current 5¢ refund.

The proposal, commonly known as the Bottle Bill, expands the law to beverage containers that contain tea, water, juices, and sport drinks. This would apply to plastic, glass, and metal containers.

In addition, the bill increases the handling fee that each distributor pays to the redemption centers. Currently, the handling fee is 1¢ per container redeemed. The bill increases the handling fee to 2¢ per container redeemed. There has not been an increase in the handling fee since the inception of the Bottle Bill in 1979.

Opponents of the bottle bill say the changes will increase the costs

of products and the costs will be passed on to consumers. Proponents of the bottle bill say the proposal is in line with the original intent of the bill to reduce litter and as an incentive for citizens to return their empty containers rather than discard them.



House Study Bill 734 is now eligible for debate by the Iowa House.

## Internet Predators of Children

The House Public Safety Committee adopted a bill this week that develops stronger tools for law enforcement to use to stop internet predators of children. Officers said predators will often pose as children, creating a bond with their young victims, and prompting them to reveal more information than they should.

Investigators estimate a potential predator can learn a child's vital information — full name, address, phone number, school and more — within 20 minutes of a chat-room meeting. Armed with just a bit of personal information, the rest is often available by using common internet search engines.

House File 762, as amended, establishes the crime of indecent



exposure by electronic transmission of an image, including webcams. A person, who electronically transmits an image of their genitals, or

of themselves committing a sex act, commits an aggravated misdemeanor if the image is intended to be viewed by a child under the age of 14, or a person they believe to be a child, and it is done for sexual purposes. The penalty is a maximum two years in prison and a maximum fine of \$6,250.

For this internet crime against children, the perpetrator cannot

receive any deferred judgments or deferred sentences.

The bill establishes a serious misdemeanor criminal offense if the electronic image is intended to be viewed by anyone else, it's done for sexual purposes, and they know the image will be offensive to the viewer. This penalty is a maximum one year in jail and maximum fine of \$1,875.

### **Sex Abuse Against a Minor**

The bill also increases the age of a minor from "under 12" to "under 13" as it relates to the crimes of sex abuse in the second degree and sex abuse in the third degree. This will allow for harsher penalties for people who prey on children under 13.

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## **Lottery Games for Veterans Trust Fund Approved**

The House amended and approved House File 2359 that directs the State Lottery to create two additional scratch and pull-tab games annually with the profits dedicated to veterans, their spouses, and dependents. The Lottery estimates that these additional games would generate approximately \$3 million annually.

The bill dedicates the lottery ticket profits to the Veterans Trust Fund, until the fund reaches a balance of \$50 million or more. Once the trust fund is filled, the remaining moneys are appropriated to the county directors of veteran affairs. The funds will be distributed to the counties with 50% going equally to

each county and 50% based on population.

The Veterans Affairs Commission is currently authorized to expend the interest earned on the Veterans Trust Fund, as long as a \$5 million balance is maintained, for the following purposes:

- Travel expenses for wounded veterans directly related to follow-up medical care.
- Job training or college tuition assistance for job retraining.
- Unemployment assistance during a period of unemployment due to prolonged physical or mental

illness or disability resulting from military service.

- Expenses related to nursing facility or at-home care.
- Benefits provided to children of disabled or deceased veterans.
- Individual counseling or family counseling programs.
- Family support group programs or programs for children of members of the military.
- Honor guard services.

The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

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## **Immigration Legislation**

This week the House Labor Committee passed, without recommendation, an immigration and employee misclassification bill. The bill moves to the House floor on a bipartisan vote. House Study Bill 717, as amended, would require an employer to sign a form indicating that a job applicant's appearance matches a valid photo ID. This action must be done within 10 days of the employee being hired.

A photo copy of the license must be kept on file. If the employer falsifies the information in the form, they could be subject to perjury charges.

This portion of the bill is designed to crack down on employers who hire and sometimes exploit illegal aliens. Although the federal government has laws and enforcement measures in this area, the Bush administration has been unable to pass any meaningful immigration reform, or keep up with the

enforcement of the laws that are already on the books.

Proponents of the bill feel that the bill will crack down on employers that are exploiting workers for cheap labor. Opponents feel that workers will be stereotyped through the legislation and will not be hired if they do not possess a photo ID.

### **Employee Misclassification**

The less controversial section of the bill deals with the illegal

practice of misclassifying an employee. There has been a rise, particularly in the construction field, of employees being hired as independent contractors, usually paid in cash. In reality, the workers are actual employees of the contractor.

In some cases these employees are hired by the employer through labor brokers from other countries.

They are not considered an employee for workers' compensation, unemployment and insurance premiums.

It is also a worker safety issue since it is one way of cutting corners to save costs. Because these workers are not considered an employee, they are not subject to safety enforcement regulations.

The bill would fine employers doing this practice in the construction industry. Responsible employers are bearing the cost of this fraud by being at a competitive disadvantage on projects because they are paying higher wages, premiums for workers' compensation and providing health insurance.

## New Regulation of Foreclosure Consultants

The House Commerce Committee passed House Study Bill 747, which is designed to stop abuses involving mortgage foreclosure consultants and foreclosure reconveyance transactions. The bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

A foreclosure consultant is one who, for a fee, offers to help a homeowner avoid foreclosure. They are prohibited from:

- Accepting compensation until after all services are performed.
- Charging more than an annual 8% of the amount of any loan made to the homeowner.
- Taking a property lien, wage assignment, or other security to ensure payment by the homeowner.
- Accepting third-party payment in connection with services, unless disclosed to the homeowner.
- Acquiring interest in a home from an owner with whom the consultant contracted.
- Accepting a power of attorney from an owner, except to inspect documents as provided by law.

- Inducing an owner to enter into a contract not in compliance with the requirements of this bill.

- Accepting payment for promising to negotiate a loan or modify a real estate contract without successfully doing so.



- Trying to prohibit the borrower from contacting any lender, servicer, government entity, or any other person helping the consumer.

### Reconveyances

A foreclosure reconveyance is the transfer of title by the homeowner and the later transfer back to that homeowner after completion of foreclosure proceedings. A foreclosure consultant is prohibited from entering into a foreclosure reconveyance unless:

- The purchaser verifies that the homeowner has a reasonable ability to pay for the reconveyance.
- The purchaser and homeowner complete a real estate closing for

any reconveyance in which the purchaser gets a deed or mortgage.

- The purchaser gets the written consent of the homeowner for any grant of interest in the property while the homeowner maintains any interest in the property.

- The purchaser complies with federal requirements for disclosure, loan terms, and conduct for any foreclosure.

### Private Right to Sue

All remedies under Iowa's Consumer Fraud Act are available to the homeowner either by a legal action filed by the Attorney General or by the homeowner for violations of the bill. If the court finds a violation occurred, it shall award the owner actual damages, equitable relief, and court costs and attorney fees. In addition, a violator commits a serious misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of from \$315 to \$1,875 and up to one year in prison.

## Bill Establishes Livestock Odor Mitigation Study

On an 18-3 vote, the House Agriculture Committee adopted a bill this week that requires Iowa State University to consult with the

Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to establish and administer on-site research



efforts to mitigate odor emitted from livestock operations involving swine, beef or dairy cattle, chickens, or turkeys.

House Study Bill 679 is in response to these three agencies' joint proposal outlined to the Legislature's Livestock Odor Study Committee last fall. This joint proposal outlines a five-year comprehensive research plan at a total cost of \$22.8 million. The bill establishes the parameters of the study; it does not contain any money for odor mitigation efforts.

The committee amended the bill to require ISU, if funding is available, to provide for a livestock odor mitigation evaluation effort, which would be a three-level approach to siting livestock operations based upon odor exposure. Certain permitted confinement operations would be required to conduct an evaluation, which could be

as easy as filling out a questionnaire on the internet, to having an ISU specialist come to their farm and assist the producer with the evaluation, or to actually completing a full community-based odor assessment model developed by ISU. The information from this evaluation would only be used as part of the odor mitigation study.

Supporters said this bill sends a positive message that we support Iowa's \$8 billion livestock industry, while also taking into consideration efforts needed to be good neighbors. Applied research on producers' farms will go a long ways toward determining how to address the livestock odor issues.

The purposes of the research efforts are to accelerate the adoption of affordable and effective odor mitigation technologies and strategies by livestock producers, while also providing research-

grounded information on odor mitigation technologies and strategies that are ineffective or cost-prohibitive.

Opponents argued that there needs to be more transparency in this study. The only data from the study that would be available to the public would be in the aggregate form, not individual situations. The public would not be able to know the location of a proposed confinement building, the configuration of the building and surrounding landscape, and other odor mitigation measures to produce the best possible reduction of odors from the confinement feeding operation. In addition, there is no guarantee that this research effort will be funded as a public/private partnership.

The bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

## Mental Health Insurance for Veterans

The House Veterans Affairs Committee approved House File 2033 that requires health insurance companies, which provide group health insurance, to cover mental illness and substance abuse treatment for employees who are war veterans. The requirement applies to all group health insurance plans for all public employees, private employers with more than 50 employees, and employers with small group health coverage.

The bill is viewed as a way Iowa can support veterans who are returning from active duty and are finding it difficult to get treatment at the Veterans Administration. Many veterans have to travel out of town to receive VA services and often face waiting lists to receive services. According to the VA, more than half of the veterans who have committed suicide are National Guard or military reservists

who have returned from active duty.

The bill allows carriers to organize and manage benefits through common methods, which includes providing payment of benefits under a capitated payment system, prospective reimbursement rate system, utilization control system, incentive system for least restrictive and least costly levels of care, a preferred provider contract limiting choice of specific providers, or other methods that assure services are medically necessary and clinically appropriate.

The bill prevents the imposition of an aggregate annual or lifetime limit on mental illness or substance abuse coverage benefits unless the policy imposes an aggregate annual or lifetime limit on substantially all medical and surgical coverage benefits.

The bill requires coverage for at least 30 inpatient days and 52 outpatient days per enrollee per year. The policy may include deductibles, coinsurance, or copayments, to the same extent they apply to other medical or surgical services covered under the policy. It is not a violation if the policy excludes the following:

- Care that is substantially custodial in nature.
- Services and supplies that are not medically necessary or clinically appropriate.
- Experimental treatments.

The requirements in the bill would apply to all policies delivered, continued, or renewed in Iowa on or after January 1, 2009.

## Bill Sets Special Election Dates

Due to concerns that the number of special elections is increasing which, in turn, increases the costs to taxpayers, Secretary of State Michael Mauro proposed legislation to limit the number of special elections held in Iowa.

House Study Bill 627 received bipartisan support from the House State Government committee on Wednesday, March 5.

As amended and passed, cities, counties and schools can hold special elections on four dates per year.

- **School districts and merged areas:** in even-numbered years on the first Tuesday in February, the first Tuesday in April, the second Tuesday in September or the first Tuesday in December; in the odd-numbered years on the first Tuesday in February, the first Tuesday in April, the last Tuesday in June or the second Tuesday in September.

- **Cities and Counties:** on the first Tuesday in March, May, August and November.

According to a Des Moines Register news article of July 16, 2007, Secretary Mauro stated that he feels there are too many special elections. According to the Secretary of State's office, there have been 409 special elections in the state since January 2006. Polk County taxpayers have spent more than \$1 million on elections since January 2006 – more than one-third has been spent on 16 special elections at a cost of \$334,059. Linn County has held 12 special elections since 2006 costing taxpayers \$106,602.

The Secretary of State also stated that there were 313 special elections held in 2006-2007; some of them held within a couple of weeks after a jurisdiction's regularly scheduled election. Currently, there are 40 Tuesdays in an odd-

numbered year and 39 Tuesdays in an even-numbered year on which special elections can be held.

Limiting the number of special elections has bipartisan support. However, bills in the past have met with resistance and have not passed. Opponents of limiting special elections feel that placing local-option sales tax issues or bond issues on the ballot with a general election results in voters paying less attention to these special issues. Proponents of limiting special elections state that it saves taxpayers money. Additionally, they cite low voter turnout when a special election is held.

This bill also changes the terms of elected school board and area education members, responds to a lawsuit brought against the state by the Green and Libertarian parties, and makes changes relating to challenges to a person's qualifications when registering to vote.

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## Main Street Communities Announced

For more than 20 years, the Main Street Iowa program and its communities have been nationally recognized for its efforts to revitalize downtowns. Recently, four Iowa communities were selected to join the Main Street Iowa program. They are Belle Plaine, Mount Vernon, Washington and Woodbine. The announcement was made during a special ceremony held in Des Moines.

The addition of these new communities brings the total number of Main Street communities in Iowa to thirty-nine. The selected communities demonstrated strong partnerships, a high level of volunteerism and a commitment to the revitalization of their downtown districts.

In order to be designated a Main Street Iowa community, representatives from the town must attend rigorous training sessions before even being eligible to apply. They must demonstrate support from local organizations, businesses and legislators; local secured funding documented; strategic plans outlining short and long-term goals must be in place; and city resolutions and historic preservation ordinances must be passed and signed. Most importantly, community officials, business owners and volunteers must agree to work together for common goals. Those goals are:

- Preserving Iowa's historic buildings and unique downtown business districts, and

- Improving the local economy by adopting and following the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization.

While it may be challenging to become a Main Street community, designated communities reap many benefits. During the first three years of the program, each community receives 40 days of on-site training and technical assistance from Main Street Iowa, National Main Street Center staff and private consultants, as well as 30 days of training for volunteers and local staff, resulting in a state investment of \$100,000. Main Street communities each receive continuing training valued at \$10,000 annually.

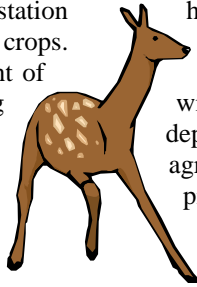
Over the years, by working together with the state, Main Street Iowa communities have realized

the benefits of more than 1.5 million hours of volunteer time committed to improving their city centers, a significantly increased job

and business base, and millions of dollars in private investment to purchase, construct and rehabilitate downtown property.

## Bill Establishes a Deer Depredation Program

Legislators have heard from farmers regarding the devastation deer are causing to their crops. Working with the Department of Natural Resources, hunting organizations, and farm organizations, the House Natural Resources Committee adopted a bill this week that establishes a depredation management program to help farmers address the problems they're having from deer.



A landowner who incurs crop, horticultural product, tree, or nursery damage in excess of \$1,000 or more, due to wildlife, is to enter into a depredation management agreement with DNR. The producers will be issued a set number of licenses from the department. These licenses are available to hunters for that farmer's property.

tion management program. DNR is also required to develop a master hunter program and maintain a list of master hunters who are available to assist producers with hunting does on their property.

Finally, the bill establishes a deer study advisory committee to study the best way to maintain a sustainable, socially acceptable deer population in Iowa, while maximizing and balancing the economic value of deer hunting to Iowa's economy with the needs of the agricultural industry and public safety concerns. A final report is due by January 10, 2009.

House File 2052, as amended by the committee, requires DNR to make deer depredation hunting licenses available to resident hunters. These licenses allow the hunting of does on farmers' property during the hunting seasons.

Deer shooting permits must also be available from DNR. These permits may be used outside the established deer hunting seasons on the farmers' property.

The bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

The bill requires DNR to conduct outreach programs for farmers and farm and commodity organizations that explain the deer depreda-

## Price Laboratory Research and Development School

The House Education Committee passed House File 2399 this week that would expand the role of the Price Laboratory School located at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI).

Because of the ongoing initiative, House File 2399 was introduced to bring the concept to fruition. The bill will require the department of education and the president of UNI to work together to establish a finance and funding committee and an implementation committee for the initiative.

evaluate the current condition of the Price Laboratory facility.

During the 2007 session, the Legislature required the department of education and the university to conduct a study on making Price Laboratory a research and development prekindergarten through grade twelve institution. The report of the study is to be given to the Legislature at the beginning of the 2009 session.

The finance and funding committee will include individuals from UNI, the department of education, and educators with experience in school finance. The committee will develop a plan for sustained operational and capital funding through existing and new sources as well as

Members of the implementation committee will include Price Laboratory faculty, UNI faculty, and department of education staff. The committee will develop a detailed transition plan for expanding the Price school and develop a detailed governance structure that outlines specific roles and responsibilities.

The bill will take effect immediately if passed by both the House and Senate and signed by the Governor. House File 2399 now moves to the full House for debate.

## DOT Policy Bill Passes House Transportation

The House Transportation Committee approved the Department of Transportation (DOT) policy bill this week. House Study Bill 648 and the amendments to the bill made over a dozen changes in law.

The bill allows the DOT and local authorities to issue annual and single-trip highway permits for the movement of cranes utilized in the construction of alternative energy facilities, regardless of the weight of the crane. The bill also allows special multitrip permits, valid for 12 months or less, for the movement of oversized and overweight vehicles in an alternative energy construction site or staging area. The fee is \$600.

### **Disabled Veterans**

An amendment to the bill provides that a seriously disabled vet-

eran who is provided a vehicle by the U.S. government does not have to apply for a disabilities parking permit. This provision does not apply if the disabled veteran has a special registration plate or personalized plate for the provided vehicle.

### **Substance Abuse Classes**

An amendment to the bill clarified an inequity in substance abuse classes that are required for reinstatement of driving privileges under certain offenses. Under current law, classes offered at a state correctional facility do not qualify as accredited classes under this provision. This change allows individuals who are incarcerated and only have access to programs available in correction facilities, and not the currently accredited community colleges, to complete the require-

ments to have driving privileges restored.

### **Antique Vehicle Plates**

An antique motor vehicle plate for trucks, truck and road tractors, or motor homes is authorized. In order to qualify, an appropriate vehicle must be at least 25 years old and the owner must intend the vehicle for only "limited use." Allowed uses under the amendment include exhibition at a state or county fair or other places where the vehicle will be exhibited for entertainment or education purposes. The antique plates require a \$70 certificate and \$40 for license plates, both valid for two years.