



# Representative Andrew Wenthe Statehouse News

March 27, 2008

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## Capitol Comments

One of my favorite things about serving as your State Representative is welcoming visitors from home to the Capitol, especially those who have never visited our historic building before. This week, Jon and Janet Halverson of Hawkeye traveled to Des Moines with their three sons and took a tour of the Capitol. Kids are always wide-eyed when they gaze up at the Capitol dome for the first time, wondering just how tall it is (275 feet) and if that's real gold on top (it is – 23 karat). Their eyes get even wider when I tell them that if they want to go all the way to the top we'll only need to walk up 298 steps!



**Rep. Wenthe with Jon and Janet Halverson along with their three sons.**

I'm humbled every morning when I walk up the Capitol steps knowing that I get to serve you in this terrific building. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to share the Capitol with visitors from back home, and I thank the Halversons and all the other families who take the time to see government in action. If you are interested in a Capitol tour, please contact me anytime so I can help arrange your visit, or go to

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/tours/index.htm> to set up your tour.

Tim Recker and Tim Burrack representing the Iowa Corn Growers Association also visited me this week. It just so happened that on the day of their visit I was running a bill on the floor of the House that was one of the association's highest priorities. The bill had to do with Iowa's membership in the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes and it was nice to be able to run this bill, which passed unanimously, while Mr. Recker and Mr. Burrack were in town.

The "second funnel" occurred this week, meaning that bills must have passed at least one chamber of the General Assembly and passed out of committee in the other chamber to stay alive. The winnowing process is used to make sure that major pieces of legislation can be considered before the April 22 adjournment date. However, even bills that appear dead at this point can sometimes be resurrected in future weeks. This is

### Funnel Proof Bills

Bills that are currently funnel proof include:

- Major healthcare reform
- Mandatory model core curriculum
- Crack down on CEOs who knowingly hire illegal immigrants
- Expand Iowa's Bottle Law
- Protect Consumers from identity theft
- Prevent students from dropping out of school before they are 17
- Convert the current one cent school infrastructure local option sales tax to a statewide sales tax for school infrastructure and property tax relief

because bill in either the House or Senate Ways and Means Committees or Appropriation Committees are “funnel proof” and remain eligible for debate at any time.

For instance, the expansion of the bottle bill is one bill that is being kept alive because of this rule. While this bill did not pass either the House or Senate, it has been sent to the House Appropriations Committee in order for continued work to be done on

the proposal. As you know from my previous newsletters, I am in favor of providing more support to our redemption centers, which have operated on the same profit margin for decades. I am glad that this bill continues to have some life.

In addition to legislation that is yet to be considered, a number of bills have already become law or are awaiting the Governor’s signature. These include allowable growth for schools, surface

water protection, protecting jobs of veterans returning from active duty, exempting the federal rebates from state taxes, and requiring paper trails to insure our election outcomes are reliable.

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!

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## Iowa 9<sup>th</sup> in Personal Income Growth

According to a new study by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), Iowa per capita personal income growth outpaced the national per capita growth average of 5.2 percent. In 2007, Iowa total per capita income surpassed Ohio and Oregon, moving the state from 29<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

In the rankings provided by the BEA, Louisiana showed the highest jump in personal income growth at 9.2%. Iowans’ income increased to \$35,023 in 2007 from \$33,038 in

2006. Iowa ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in personal income growth at 6%. Arizona and Tennessee had the lowest growth at 3%. The study indicated that farm income was higher in Iowa. This is why Iowa’s growth was ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.

According to the Department of Economic Development, Iowa currently ranks first-in-the-nation in ethanol, second in biodiesel and fourth in wind energy. Also according to the department, Iowa’s 2007 exports of manufactured and value-added goods increased 14%

to \$9.6 billion from \$8.4 billion the year before. This also surpassed the national average of 12.11 percent.

New unemployment figures released by Workforce Development show that in February 2008, Iowa’s unemployment rate was 3.5 percent, lower than the national average of 4.8 percent. Iowa’s rate was also down from January and from a year ago.

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## School Sales Tax Passes Committee

House File 2663, formerly House File 2066, passed the House Ways and Means Committee with bi-partisan support last Thursday night. This legislation would make the current one cent local option sales tax for schools a statewide sales tax. The bill has also been called the School Infrastructure Local Option (SILO) tax bill for school districts or the statewide penny bill.

House File 2663 removes the current local option sales tax that a school district can impose for school infrastructure and replaces it with a permanent statewide one cent tax. Currently, all 99 counties have approved the one cent local

option sales tax, with Linn and Johnson counties being the last to approve the local option in 2007. Other counties, such as Woodbury, have already reauthorized the local option tax for another 10 years.

With voter approval, voters in a county can impose the one cent local option tax to be used for specific purposes outlined in a “revenue purpose plan” as allowed by Iowa law. The purposes that can be included relate to school infrastructure such as the cost of construction, repayment of bonds, or property tax relief.

House File 2663 would still require that school districts use the revenue for specific purposes but

would allow counties to develop a new “revenue purpose plan”

All the sales tax money will go into one “pot.” It will be distributed out to school districts on a per pupil basis. The amount distributed in the first year, fiscal year 2009, is estimated to be \$372 million to school districts. Another \$28 million would be used for property tax relief and distributed out of the property tax equity and relief fund in fiscal year 2009.

The new version of the bill removes the use tax on motor vehicles that was previously included in House File 2066. Under that bill, a portion of the funds would have

gone to the road use tax fund. That amount was \$53 million in FY09.

The Ways and Means Committee decided to take out any provisions dealing with the road use tax

fund and leave that to the TIME-21 discussion on how to raise more money for road and bridge maintenance and construction. The bill now only deals with the same sales

taxes that are currently raised for purposes of school infrastructure.

The bill is now eligible for debate by the full House.

## Governor Signs Tax Exemption for Federal Rebates

Governor Culver signed legislation to exempt federal rebate checks from Iowa income taxes, saving Iowans \$67.5 million.

For most, the federal rebate is equal to their 2007 tax liability, up to \$600 (\$1,200 joint returns). The minimum is \$300 (\$600 joint) and there is an extra \$300 per child eligible for the Child Tax Credit. Those with little or no tax bill may qualify for the minimum \$300 rebate (\$600 joint), with at least \$3,000 in qualifying income.

Rebates are reduced by 5% of the amount of income exceeding \$75,000 (\$150,000 joint). For more information, check the IRS internet site at <http://www.irs.gov/irs/article/0,,id=177937,00.html>.

### Senator Harkin Gets Help For Iowans

Senator Tom Harkin said the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will open four locations this Saturday, March 29, to help Iowans who are

eligible for a rebate but normally don't file an income tax return. This group includes many retirees, veterans and low-income workers.

IRS offices that will be open from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>:

**Cedar Rapids** - 425 Second St. SE

**Des Moines** - 210 Walnut St.

**Sioux City** - 3539 Southern Hills Drive

**Waterloo** - 300 W. Third St.

## Core Curriculum Bill Before House

Senate File 2216, the Iowa Model Core Curriculum bill, passed the House Education Committee this week. The bill would mandate a core curriculum for all accredited Iowa schools.

Iowa is currently the only state that does not have any mandatory statewide measures or standards for curriculum and teaching. Senate File 2216 would achieve this, allowing Iowa to join the rest of the states to put measures in place.

Senate File 2216 will require that all accredited public and accredited non-public schools adopt the model core curriculum. Right now, a model core curriculum exists but it is voluntary and schools do not have to adopt it. The Iowa Core Curriculum provides local school districts a guide to delivering instructional content that is challenging and meaningful to students.

In 2005, the Legislature directed the department of education

to engage stakeholder groups to develop the core curriculum for high schools in math, science, and literacy. In 2007, the work expanded when the Legislature mandated standards, expanded the core curriculum to include kindergarten through eighth grade, and added the additional subject areas of social studies and 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills.

In the interim, the department assessed school districts' readiness to implement the Iowa Core Curriculum. The department determined that about half of Iowa's school districts were already utilizing the Iowa Core Curriculum on a voluntary basis. It was determined that the rest of the school districts were either waiting for a mandate or needed assistance with implementation.

Core curriculum was already developed for use in grades nine through twelve. The department

was required, in 2007, to develop core curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight in order to make the Iowa Core Curriculum fluid for K-12 education.

Important considerations in completing this work included the following:

- The needs of students.
- The needs of a changing workforce.
- The need to remain globally competitive.

The curriculum that was developed identifies the essential concepts and skill sets needed for literacy, mathematics, science and social studies, as well as 21st century learning skills that include civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability. The Iowa Core Curriculum encourages instructional practices that deeply engage stu-



dents by requiring them to be active learners and critical thinkers who can apply their learning to new and unpredictable situations.

Senate File 2216 now establishes that the Iowa Core Curriculum is mandatory in all grades. The school districts must adopt a set of core content standards that include reading, mathematics, and science that are similar to the standards authorized under No Child Left Behind.

As part of the high school curriculum for graduation requirements, a school district must adopt, at a minimum, four years of English and language arts, three years of mathematics, three years of science, and three years of social studies. Also included in the high school core curriculum will be the core content standards and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills.

School districts have until 2010 to implement the Iowa Core

Curriculum into all grades. The bill is now eligible for debate on the House floor.

For more information on the Iowa Core Curriculum, visit the department of education's site at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/674/1023/> or the model core curriculum site at <http://www.iowamodelcore.org/>.

## Legislature Passes Collective Bargaining Bill

House File 2645 expands the list of items that can be negotiated in the collective bargaining process for public employees. Currently, when contracts are negotiated between public employees and public employers, only certain subjects are required to be considered. Under the bill, public employees in a collective bargaining unit would now be allowed to discuss with management additional items.

Iowa is one of seven states that have a "limited scope" for negotiations under collective bargaining. There are 34 states that allow bargaining for the terms and conditions of employment. This is called "open scope." There are nine states that do not allow collective bargaining at all. House File 2645 would allow open scope collective bargaining in Iowa.

Supporters of the bill believe that crucial issues such as class size and preparation time for teachers should be considered in negotiations. Equipment issues such as how many bullet proof vests are available for police officers or

health insurance for retirees are other issues that could be discussed. This is a major issue for fire fighters since they tend to retire before they are eligible for Medicare.

Open scope is allowed in the private sector, and this would allow public employees to have the same rights. In addition, some of these issues are already discussed by public employees and employers, although it is entirely on a voluntary basis.

Opponents, during the two day debate in the House and two day debate in the Senate, argued that the bill would automatically raise property taxes. They also felt that the bill would give too much power to arbitrators. However, just because issues are discussed in negotiations does not mean that the issue will become part of a bargaining agreement. Negotiations involve how the pie is divided up; the size of the pie is already decided.

Both sides have to split the cost for an arbitrator, so many

cases do not even make it that far. Although some arbitrators are attorneys, most of the time they are professors of economics. In one of the classic cases of binding arbitration, in 1991 Governor Branstad and public employees went to binding arbitration. Although public employees received an increase in pay, the arbitrator also ruled that the cost would come out of the health care plan.

Many cities, counties, community colleges, community school districts and AEA's will not even be affected by House File 2645 since they do not have a union that represents their employees. The Public Employee Relation's Board website has a list of all employees that fall under a collective bargaining unit. That website is <http://search.iowaperb.iowa.gov/contracts/>.

Currently the bill is being held by the Senate to give the Governor more time to consider the legislation.

## Two Identity Theft Bills Pass House Committee

The House Commerce Committee passed two bills this week to protect Iowans from identify theft. The bills now go to the full House

for consideration.

### **Notice of Security Breach**

Senate File 2308 requires notification of consumers of a security

breach involving personal information by the one who owns, maintains or otherwise has the information. Notice must include the date and description of the breach, type of data obtained, how to contact reporting agencies, and how to report suspected identity theft incidents to the Attorney General or local law enforcement.

The notice may be provided in writing or electronically if a business usually communicates with the consumer by electronic means. If regular notice costs over \$250,000, the number of affected consumers exceeds 350,000, or the business lacks contact information, then substitute notice is allowed by:

- Email when the business has the consumers' email addresses.
- Conspicuous posting of the notice or a link to the notice on the businesses internet web site.
- Use of major statewide media.

### Credit Security Freeze

Senate File 2277 allows a consumer to request credit reporting agencies to freeze future release of their credit information. The request must be sent by certified mail, with proper identification and an application fee, if applicable.

- The reporting agency must start the freeze within five business days after receiving the request.
- Within 10 business days after starting the freeze, the reporting agency must send the consumer written confirmation and a personal ID number or password to use when authorizing suspension or removal of the freeze.

The freeze remains in effect until the consumer requests that it be removed. The reporting agency must remove the freeze within three business days after receiving a request that includes proper identification, ID number or password, and payment of the applicable fee.

Temporary Suspension: The consumer may request a temporary suspension of the freeze to allow the reporting agency to release their credit report for a specific time period. This gives the consumer the ability to open new lines of credit.

The reporting agency must comply within three business days after receipt of a written request, or 15 minutes after receipt of a request by phone during regular business hours or through facsimile, the internet, or other electronic means chosen by the reporting agency.

Exemption from Fees: A reporting agency cannot charge any fee to a consumer who is the victim of identity theft if, with the initial freeze request, the consumer submits a valid copy of a police report of the unlawful use of identification information by another person.

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## Effort to Constitutionally Protect Natural Resources

On a unanimous, bi-partisan vote, the House Natural Resources Committee adopted the resolution to add an amendment to Iowa's constitution to protect natural resources and outdoor recreation funding. The bill now goes to the full House for consideration. The Senate adopted the resolution last week.

Senate Joint Resolution 2002 would have to pass the House this year, and pass the House and Senate again over the next two years, before it would go on the ballot for the general public to vote on. At the earliest, it would be on the November 2010 ballot.

Senate Joint Resolution 2002 creates a natural resources and outdoor recreation trust fund for the purpose of protecting and enhanc-

ing water quality and natural areas in Iowa. This would include parks, trails, fish and wildlife habitat, and conserving agricultural soils. Monies in this fund can only be used for these purposes.

The resolution further explains that no revenue will be credited to the fund until the tax rate in effect on the effective date of the joint resolution is increased. The effective date of the resolution is after the general public votes on it.

The intent is to credit 3/8<sup>th</sup> of 1¢ to the fund when the sales tax is increased, which would generate approximately \$150 million. The Legislature is to establish the parameters for administration of the fund.

This proposal comes after two-years of studying the issue by the

Sustainable Natural Resource Advisory Committee. It is also the recommendation of the Legislature's Sustainable Funding for Natural Resources Interim Committee that studied this issue last fall.

Iowa law does not address state referendums, so this constitutional amendment proposal does not ask Iowans whether the sales tax should be increased. It asks Iowans whether they want to protect 3/8<sup>th</sup> of 1¢ of sales tax revenue for natural resources and outdoor recreation if the Legislature increases the sales tax for this purpose.

## Bill Requires Minority Impact Statements

House File 2393, which requires minority impact statements, passed the House 99-0 this week. The bill has two main parts regarding minority impact statements.

Under current law, correctional impact statements must be attached to any bill, joint resolution, or amendment before debate in the Legislature. In addition, correctional impact statements are only required when a change in the law is proposed which creates a public offense; significantly changes an existing public offense or the penalty for an existing offense; or changes existing sentencing, parole, or probation procedures. House File 2393 adds the requirement that correctional impact statements must now include the impact of the legislation on minorities.

This idea was generated after reports indicated that a disproportionate number of minorities were incarcerated in Iowa in comparison to their share of the population. The concern is that some changes in law unintentionally target certain segments on the Iowa population.

Further, the bill adds new language stating that the Legislative Services Agency, in cooperation with the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning of the Department of Human Rights, must develop a protocol for analyzing the impact of the legislation on minorities.

### Grant Applications

Secondly, the bill requires that each application for a grant from a state agency must include a minority impact statement. For the purpose of the statements, minority is defined as individuals who are women, persons with a disability, Blacks, Latinos, Asians or Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaskan Native Americans. In addition, grants from a state agency include grants from a department, board, bureau, commission, or other agency or authority of the State of Iowa.

The statements must contain the following information:

- Any disproportionate or unique impact of proposed policies or programs on minority persons in Iowa.

- A rationale for the existence of programs or policies having an impact on minority persons in Iowa.

- Evidence of consultation with representatives of minority persons in cases where a policy or program has an identifiable impact on minority persons in Iowa.

The Office of Grants Enterprise Management will create and distribute the minority impact statement form for state agencies, and ensure its inclusion with applications for grants. The directives of this bill must be carried out within consistent federal law. All minority impact statements for grant applications will only be used for informational purposes.

If signed by the Governor, House File 2393 takes effect on July 1, 2008, and will apply to grants for which applications are due beginning January 1, 2009. The bill will be now up for consideration by the Senate.

## Require Kids 12 and Under to Wear Life Jackets

To prevent kids from drowning from a boating accident, the House Natural Resources Committee adopted a bill that requires children 12 and under to wear their life jackets while boating. This law would mirror federal law.

Current law requires that a life jacket for every person be in the boat, but they are not required to wear it. Iowa is one of only three states that currently do not require kids to wear their life jackets while boating.

The National Transportation Safety Board has said the failure of wearing a life jacket can have fatal consequences. It is the leading cause of drowning fatalities.

Senate File 203 requires the children to wear the life jacket only while the boat is moving. They also do not need to wear them in an enclosed cabin or below deck, or if they are a passenger on a commercial boat with a capacity of 25 peo-

ple or more. A one-year warning period is provided so that if the bill is signed into law, officers can only issue warning citations for the first year. After that, there would be a \$25 fine.

Federal waters in Iowa are the Mississippi and Missouri rivers; and Saylorville, Red Rock, Rathbun, and Coralville reservoirs. The Department of Natural Resources told lawmakers that officers cannot en-



force federal law without an Iowa law.

Senate File 203 is now before the full House for consideration. The Senate has already adopted the

bill. It would need to pass the House before it goes to the Governor for his signature.

## New State Regulation of Foreclosure Consultants

The House passed legislation designed to stop abuses involving mortgage foreclosure consultants. House File 2653 now goes to the Senate for its consideration.

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

- Accepting compensation until 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 Iowa 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.

## Environmental Management Systems Passes House

House File 2570, which establishes the designation of Environmental Management Systems (EMS), passed the Iowa House 96-0 this week. The purpose of the bill is to encourage responsible environmental management and solid waste disposal and to enhance efforts to promote environmental stewardship.

### EMS Designation

The EMS is defined as a solid waste planning area as designated by Iowa Code. This also includes a designated planning area that is providing multiple environmental services in addition to solid waste disposal and that is planning on the continuous improvement of solid waste management by appropriately and aggressively mitigating the environmental impacts of solid waste disposal.

To qualify for designation as an EMS, a solid waste planning area must actively pursue all of the following:

- Yard Waste Management
- Hazardous Household Waste Collection
- Water Quality Improvement
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction
- Recycling Services
- Environmental Education

In addition, starting September 1, 2009, each EMS is required to submit an annual report to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The report must document the EMS compliance with the designation requirements. When determining whether a EMS is in compliance, DNR must evaluate whether an EMS is making continuing progress in regard to the requirements of the designation.

**Solid Waste Alternatives Program Advisory Council**

A Solid Waste Alternatives Program Advisory Council is established within DNR. The advisory council is required to consider solid waste management plans submitted by the solid waste planning areas and make recommendations for designation as an EMS to the Envi-

ronmental Protection Commission (EPC). All system designations recommended by the advisory council are subject to approval by the EPC. Any solid waste planning area may submit a plan to the advisory council and seek designation as an EMS.

The EPC must consider plans submitted to the advisory council and is required to review the advisory council's recommendations on those plans. The EPC is required to approve or reject each plan and make publicly available its reasons for approving or rejecting a plan.

**Recycling Task Force**

House File 2570 also establishes the Comprehensive Recycling Planning Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to:

- Study and make recommendations for the planning and implementation of comprehensive statewide recycling programs, including an evaluation of the current beverage container control law, also known as the Bottle Bill.
- Make recommendations for reducing the amount of recyclable materials being discarded and for reducing litter.

The task force must submit a written report containing its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2009.

The bill now moves over to the Iowa Senate for consideration.

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## Judiciary Committee Approves Military Custody Bill

The House Judiciary Committee passed Senate File 2214 this week. The bill makes changes to modifications of child custody orders when the child's parent is serving in the active duty military.

The bill provides that if an application for modification of a child custody order is filed while a parent is serving on active military duty, the court may only enter a temporary child custody order only if

there is clear and convincing evidence that the change is in the best interest of the child. When the parent that was serving on active duty returns from service, the bill requires the court to reinstate the custody order that was in effect just before the parent was deployed.

Finally, the bill provides that if an application for modification of child custody is filed after a parent returns from active duty, the par-

ent's absence due to active duty cannot be considered a substantial change in circumstances and the court cannot consider the parent's absence to due active duty in determining the best interests of the child. Senate File 2214 must now be considered by the entire House.

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## More Iowans Eligible for State Disaster Aid

If the Governor declares a disaster, such as a winter storm, flooding, or a tornado, low-income Iowans are eligible for state grants to reimburse the costs of repairs of storm-damaged property, home repair, temporary housing, and food. Last year, the Legislature authorized up to \$1 million a year for this individual assistance disaster aid grant program.

The House adopted legislation this week that expands the eligibil-

ity requirements and reimbursable amounts so more Iowans can get help from the State after a disaster. These improvements were brought to our attention by the Department of Human Services (DHS), which administers the program.



DHS said, in 2007, the Governor issued six disaster emergency proclamations. There were a total of 757 grant assistance applications

with 694 qualifying for assistance. A total of just over \$300,000 was provided in grant assistance to Iowans harmed by winter storms, tornados, or flooding.

House File 2564 increases eligibility from an annual income of 130% of the federal poverty level to 200% of the federal poverty level. This means individuals with an income of up to \$20,800 or a family of four with an

income of up to \$42,400 will now be eligible for state assistance. DHS mentioned they heard the most complaints from this group of people during the past disasters because they were not eligible for state assistance and they needed help.

The bill also increases the maximum grant award from \$3,319 to \$5,000, with uninsured structure repair allowable up to the maximum of \$5,000. DHS noted that, especially during the flood events, the current awards were insufficient to repair non-insured structural

damages like basement walls or foundations. DHS believes even with this change, most reimbursement grants will remain in the area of \$600 to \$1,200 on average per application.

The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

## Transportation Policy Bill Passes House

The Department of Transportation policy bill, House File 2651, passed the House this week. The amended bill makes numerous changes to laws including ones effecting cranes utilized in alternative energy projects, seriously disabled veterans, antique vehicle plates, and private university license plates.

### Alternative Energy Cranes

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 \$600 multi-trip permits, valid for 12 months or less, for the movement of oversize and overweight vehicles in an alternative energy construction site or staging area.

### Disabled Veterans

The bill provides a seriously disabled veteran who is provided a vehicle by the U.S. government to drive without a disabilities parking permit, since the federal license plate already indicates the owner is disabled. This provision does not apply if the disabled veteran has a special registration plates or personalized plate for the provided vehicle.

### Antique Vehicle Plates

The bill creates an antique motor vehicle plate for trucks, truck and road tractors, or motor homes. In order to qualify, an appropriate vehicle must be at least 25 years old and the vehicle is only for "limited use." Allowed uses under the bill 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.

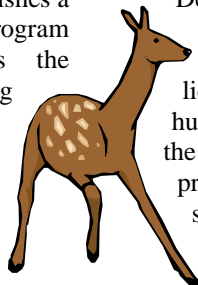
### Private University Plates

The bill creates a new four-year private college or university special license plate. After an application is submitted by a private four-year college or university located in Iowa, the Department of Transportation will work with the institution to design a license plate that displays the colors associated with that institution.

The new private college or university license plates will cost \$25, in addition to the regular annual fee. The private college or university plates can be personalized. The bill also allows both the new four-year private college or university plates and the already established state university plates to be displayed on not only motor vehicles and trailers, but also motor trucks, motor homes, and multipurpose vehicles.

## Bill Addresses Crop Damage Caused by Deer

The House gave final approval this week on a bill that establishes a depredation management program to help farmers address the problems they are having from deer. Legislators have heard from farmers regarding the devastation deer are causing to their crops and how this is affecting their livelihood.



Senate File 2328 requires the Department of Natural Resources to make deer depredation hunting licenses available to resident hunters. These licenses allow the hunting of does on farmers' property during the hunting seasons.

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.

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 requires DNR to conduct outreach programs for farmers and farm and commodity organizations that explain the deer depredation 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.

## Veteran Affairs to Control Commemorative Property

The House Veteran Affairs Committee approved Senate File 2333, which would expand control over all Veteran's commemorative property to the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. Currently the Department of Veteran Affairs has control over commemorative property in cemeteries if the commemorative property is 75 years old or older. The bill would expand con-

trol to veteran's commemorative property placed in all locations and the commemorative property no longer needs to be over 75 years old.

The bill defines veterans' commemorative property as memorials including headstones, plaques, statues, urns, decorations, flag holders, badges, shields, items of memorabilia, or other embellishments that

commemorates any veteran or group of veterans, including any veterans' organization or any military unit, company, battalion, or division.

The bill allows the Department of Veteran Affairs to control the sale, trade, or transfer of the property. The bill is now eligible for consideration of the entire Iowa House of Representatives.

## Judiciary Expands Residency for Judicial Nominees

The House Judiciary Committee passed Senate File 2211 making the bill eligible for consideration by the entire House. Senate File 2211 removes the requirements that a nominee for district judge reside in the judicial district prior to nomination for appointment. Under the bill, as in current law, a nominee would have to become a resident of

the judicial district upon appointment by the Governor to serve as a district judge for that district.

The idea behind the bill is to assure the most qualified candidates are able to apply for district judicial openings. The bill could allow additional applicants in areas of the state that have had difficulty

filling open district judge positions. The judicial nominating commission is made up of individuals from each of these judicial districts, and this legislation would allow these commissions to weigh the qualifications of applicants against the applicant's ties to the district.

## Great Places Forums and Timeline Set

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) will host four Iowa Great Places regional forums March 31-April 3, 2008, to discuss program information, the application process, grant funding, and the Great Places Citizen Advisory Board's expectations.

The Iowa Great Places regional forums will be:

**Storm Lake** - March 31, 8:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m., King's Pointe Wa-

terpark Resort, 1520 E. Lakeshore Drive.

**Corning** - April 1, 8:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m., Midwest Opportunity House, 407 8th Street, 3rd Floor, Turner Room.

**West Union** - April 2, 8:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m., Country Hills Community Golf, Restaurant, & Lounge, 10280 Echo Valley Road.

**Albia** - April 3, 8:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m., Albia Area Chamber of Commerce, 18 South Main Street.

So far, 40 projects and 120 people have already applied for the forums. RSVPs are required for the events by contacting DCA at [francis.boggus@iowa.gov](mailto:francis.boggus@iowa.gov), or by calling (515) 281-691. Agendas for each forum are available at the Iowa Great Place's Web site.

The sessions are designed to assist applicants as they develop their Great Places proposals. Administered by DCA, Iowa Great Places is a program that calls on state agencies to partner with Iowans by combining state resources with local assets to make Iowa's

communities, neighborhoods, districts and regions great places where people want to live, work and raise a family.

State agencies are working with Iowa's current 16 Great Places including Adams County, Ap-

panoose County, Charles City, Clinton, Coon Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Decorah, Dubuque, Fairfield, Guttenberg, Jackson County, Mason City, Perry, Sioux City and Valley Junction.