



# Representative Andrew Wenthe Statehouse News

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## Capitol Comments

Several new laws that the legislature passed this year will hit the books on July 1, the start of the state's fiscal year. Several changes were made during the 2008 legislative session that will impact Iowans, including expanded health care for Iowa children, insurance and identity theft protections, and more help for Iowa veterans.

I am proud of our work continuing the progress in education, health care and good-paying jobs while keeping the state's fiscal house in order. One of the bills that I am most proud of, and which I co-sponsored, is House File 2663, the bi-partisan bill that will create a statewide one cent sales tax for school infrastructure, in place of the local option sales 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. As a result, the sales tax will not increase for Iowa consumers.

Previously, voters in all Iowa counties imposed the one cent local option tax to be used for specific purposes outlined in a "revenue purpose plan." 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 allows counties to continue to use the revenue plan previously approved by voters.

However, counties may also develop a new "revenue purpose plan." A new plan must still be used for infrastructure or property tax relief.

All the sales tax money will go into one "pot." It will then be distributed out to school districts on a per pupil basis, which means that rural schools will get our fair share. Counties in their first 10 years of their SILO, approved prior to 2003, will keep all their revenues until that initial 10 years is up. Linn and Johnson counties will also keep all their revenues for 5 years, until 2014 when all counties will be contributing to the statewide pool.

A final estimate for distribution in the first year, fiscal year 2009, is estimated to be \$410.9 million to school districts. Another \$32 million would be used for property tax relief and distributed out of the property tax equity and relief fund in fiscal year 2011. In addition, property tax relief of \$18 million in fiscal year 2009 and \$24 million in fiscal year 2010 will be provided.

As always, I encourage you to contact me with your questions or comments. You can reach me at 563-427-4831 or email me at [andrew.wenthe@legis.state.ia.us](mailto:andrew.wenthe@legis.state.ia.us). Also, please sign up for my email updates and find more information at [www.andrewwenthe.org](http://www.andrewwenthe.org). I look forward to seeing you around the district soon!

# Flood Disaster Update – Damage in the Billions

Lt. Governor Patty Judge briefed Legislative Leaders this week on the flooding disaster in Iowa. Although the assessment of damages has only just begun as the flood waters recede, we do know that the damage will be in the billions of dollars. Over 40,000 people have been displaced and countless more lives have been disrupted.

Homeland Security Director David Miller said that all nine river basins in Iowa were at or exceeded record levels. These records were not exceeded by inches but by as much as 5 feet to 10 feet. In many cases, such as in Cedar Rapids, the flooding was beyond the 500 year flood plain. The Cedar, Iowa and Des Moines rivers were as wide as the Mississippi River in some places.

Lt. Governor Judge said that many state agencies were involved in the flood relief effort. She noted that 4,000 Iowa Air and Army National Guard members were deployed, some of who had just gotten off a plane returning them to Iowa from Iraq.

The disaster has affected 86 Iowa counties, covering 45,000 square miles and almost 700 towns. In Cedar Rapids, Iowa's second largest city, more than 25,000 people were evacuated and several thousand have been left homeless. In addition, the towns of Oakville, Columbus Junction, Nashua and Wapello are almost totally wiped out. A governor's proclamation of disaster has been made in the 86 counties, a presidential disaster designation providing individual assistance has been made in 47 counties, and a presidential disaster designation providing assistance to public bodies has been made in 62 counties.

Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey indicated that about 11%

of corn crops, about 3 million acres, have been destroyed and 17% of soybean crops. It may be too late to replant in some cases. The rise in the price of corn, because of this loss, will also affect livestock farmers who buy corn for feed and some of them may not survive. Conservative estimates place agricultural losses at between \$2.5 million and \$5 million.

## Housing

The loss of housing is going to be a huge issue. Right now, many families may be staying with friends and family but that can not go on indefinitely. In addition, about 300 people are living in the 7 shelters around Iowa. Those people will also be looking for somewhere else to live.

FEMA does provide housing assistance for 18 months from the time a disaster is declared. Where possible, FEMA will pay for rental housing. If that is not available, they will provide mobile homes once locations that meet federal standards for set-up are found. Cedar Rapids has already asked for about 500 mobile homes. The trailers will meet the Iowa department of public health standards for formaldehyde, which are set at less than what you would find in a brand new home after it has been carpeted.

## FEMA Assistance

The disasters started on May 25<sup>th</sup> with the tornado in Parkesburg. At that time, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) brought in 85 workers to help with the aftermath. There are now 991 FEMA workers in Iowa and it should soon exceed 1,000 people.

Bill Vogel, heading the FEMA operations in Iowa, said over \$80 million in disaster assistance has

been approved for Iowa so far. Iowans must apply for assistance within 60 days of a disaster declaration. Iowans should call 1-800-621-FEMA or 1-800-621-3362 to apply or can apply via the internet at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). FEMA has been getting about 1,000 calls per day from Iowans seeking help.

Federal assistance will only step in after private insurance has provided coverage. If you have private insurance, that insurance must be your first source of assistance.

Individuals who sustain flood/weather damage in a county that has not yet been declared a disaster area should also apply. They will then be registered if the county is declared a disaster. However, if the declaration is not made, they will not be eligible.

There are also 26 disaster recovery centers throughout Iowa, but you need to apply with FEMA first, before going to a center. The centers are located at the following sites:

**FEDERAL ASSISTANCE**

**FEMA**  
**1-800-621-FEMA or**  
**1-800-621-3362**

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**Must apply within 60 days**  
**of disaster declaration to**  
**receive assistance**

- Benton County, Vinton, New Vinton/Shellsburg
- Black Hawk County, Pine Crest Building in Waterloo and UNI Towers Center in Cedar Falls
- Bremer County, Waverly, Waverly High Commons
- Buchanan County, Aurora, Comet Center

- Butler County, American Legion Hall in Parkersburg and Fire Hall in New Hartford
- Cerro Gordo County, Mason City, South Bridge Mall
- Clayton County, Elkader, Johnson's Reception Hall
- Chickasaw County, New Hampton, Community Services Building
- Des Moines County, Burlington, Great River Medical Center
- Fayette County, West Union, County Courthouse
- Floyd County, Charles City, Middle School
- Johnson County, Kirkwood Elementary School in Coralville and Johnson County Fairgrounds in Iowa City
- Jones County, Anamosa, West Middle School
- Linn County, West Dale Mall and Prairie High School in Cedar Rapids, and Palo Fire Station in Palo
- Louisa County, Columbus Junction, American Legion Hall
- Marion County, Knoxville, former Pamida Store
- Polk County, Des Moines, Harding Middle School
- Story County, Nevada, County Administration Building
- Tama County, Toledo, former FSA office
- Union County, Creston, City Hall

Debris removal is being handled by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) can also provide assistance. Despite the name, the SBA helps both homeowners and business owners.

## Governor Streamlines State Disaster Grant Program

This week, Governor Chet Culver signed an order that will make it easier for families with low income to apply for the state's disaster grant program. The order suspends a requirement that applicants must provide receipts for disaster-related expenses before getting a state grant. As a result, applicants will be able to use the grant to make repairs rather than spending their own money first and then getting reimbursed.

The Governor stated he is committed to helping those affected by this year's natural disasters. With this proclamation, Iowans will now have easier access to the state's individual assistance program, and will be able to get the resources they need faster than before. The Governor has declared disasters for 86 of Iowa's 99 counties because of tornadoes and

flooding. His declaration automatically launches the low-income disaster assistance grant program.

However, the state program is automatically superseded when the President declares a disaster for individual assistance, which President Bush has done for 48 counties. Thus, residents in only 38 counties remain eligible for the state-only program. The Iowa-only program is available in these counties:

Adair, Appanoose, Audubon, Carroll, Cass, Clarke, Clinton, Dallas, Dubuque, Davis, Decatur, Greene, Grundy, Guthrie, Howard, Humboldt, Henry, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Lyon, Mitchell, Montgomery, Monroe, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Pottawattamie, Poweshiek, Ringgold, Shelby, Taylor, Van Buren, Worth, Washington, Wayne, and Winnebago.



The maximum grant in the state program is \$3,319, which is far less than the \$28,000 available under federal programs. Further, the Iowa program is only for people with low incomes, 130% of Federal Poverty Levels, while the federal program has fewer eligibility restrictions.

The grant program is administered by the Iowa Department of Human Services. An application form and line-by-line instructions on how to fill it out can be found on the DHS website at [www.dhs.iowa.gov](http://www.dhs.iowa.gov). For help, call toll free 1-877-937-3663.

# Flooding Still Affecting Travel Across the State

The record 2008 floods are still having a significant effect on travel across Iowa. Flooding is still affecting travel by car and train across the state. The receding flood waters are also causing significant damage to Iowa's travel infrastructure. There is an estimated 5,000 miles of roads still closed, about 1,5000 miles will need repairs, and assessments are still continuing.



**US 6 at the Cedar River**

Flooding across the state continues to affect several major routes in Iowa, including portions of US 6, 18, 61, and 151 and Iowa 1, 3, 14, 16, 22, 24, 76, and 150. In addition, several major bridges are

affected by the flooding, especially in eastern Iowa, including US 34 at Burlington and US 136 at Keokuk.

For the most updated road closure information in Iowa, motorists can visit <http://511ia.org>. Motorists traveling outside of Iowa are also advised to check road conditions in Missouri and Illinois. Missouri road conditions can be accessed at <http://www.modot.org/northeast/Thisweekroadwork.htm> or by calling 1-888-ASK-MODOT. Illinois road conditions can be accessed at <http://dot.state.il.us/tpublic.html> or by calling 1-800-452-4638.

The DOT is also warning that ignoring or moving barricades on closed roads can be extremely dangerous. Many of the roads that are or have been covered by water have sustained severe damage. These roads include US 6 and 18 and Iowa 1, 3, 22, 24, 92, and 150. Damage to these roadways cannot be repaired until flood waters recede and the repair process can take months.

The floods are also affecting



**US 150 North of Vinton**

passenger rail travel in Iowa. About 400 miles of rail was damaged and 6 bridges are out. Service by the Southwest Chief between Kansas City and Chicago has been restored, except for service to the Fort Madison stop. Service on the California Zephyr between Chicago and Denver remains suspended. No alternate transportation is available to or from stops in Iowa. Service by the Empire Builder between St. Paul and Chicago remains suspended. Alternate transportation by chartered motor coaches is being provided.

## Health Related Bills to Become Law

On July 1, many bills that the Legislature passed this year will become law. The Legislature focused their attention on insuring more Iowans, promoting disease prevention and wellness, and protecting older Iowans.

### Covering Iowans

House File 2539 was a very expansive health care bill that passed with bi-partisan support in the House and the Senate. Included in the bill is funding to cover all kids in Iowa, not now covered by insurance, within the next three years.

In addition, up to the age of 25, an unmarried

child who is a resident of Iowa will be able to continue their health insurance coverage through their parents. Further, the child can maintain their coverage past the age of 25, as long as they are a full time student. This provision applies to group and individual insurance plans for public and private employees, which are renewed or starting on or after July 1, 2008.



Insurance companies can not underwrite new policy holders for pre-existing conditions if they are accepted into an individual insurance policy directly from a private group insurance and there is not a lapse in credible coverage. This provision

is only applicable if the amount of time between the previous coverage and the effective date of the new coverage is less than 63 days. This does not apply for persons coming off of public programs like Medicaid, Medicare, and *hawk-i*. Again, this provision applies to policies renewed or starting on or after July 1, 2008.

### Prevention and Wellness

House File 2145 requires insurance companies to provide coverage benefits for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination if they provide coverage benefits for any other vaccinations or immunizations. Studies have shown that HPV vaccination can prevent certain types of cervical cancer in

women. This is not a mandate for young women to obtain the vaccination. The vaccinations must be included in all policies written, renewed, or that go into effect after January 1, 2009.

House File 2539 establishes a grant program within the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) to energize local communities to promote healthy lifestyles. The IDPH will distribute the grants on a competitive basis and will support the grantee communities in planning and developing wellness strategies and establishing methodologies to sustain the strategies. The Legislature appropriated \$900,000 for this initiative.

Further, the House File 2539 established the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition. The Council will assist implementing a statewide comprehensive plan to increase physical activity, improve physical fitness, improve nutrition, and promote healthy be-

haviors. The initial draft of the implementation plan will be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2008. The Council will also provide oversight for the Governor's Physical Fitness Challenge, and develop the curriculum, including benchmarks and rewards, for advancing the school wellness policy through the Challenge.

**Protecting Older Iowans**

House File 2591 is intended to protect against dependent adult abuse in elder group homes, assisted living programs, adult day service programs, and hospitals. The bill requires the Department of Inspection and Appeals (DIA) to investigate cases of suspected dependent abuse by a caretaker in a health care facility, hospital, elder group home, certified assisted living program or an adult day services program. DIA already has the authority to investigate in nursing homes. Caretaker is defined as

a staff member who provides care, protection or services to a dependent adult. DIA must notify DHS if they find dependent abuse so the caretaker can be included on the central registry of abusers and the county attorney is notified of any abuse reports.

House File 2609 amends current law stating that, upon completion of the informal review, the findings of fact in a monitoring evaluation or complaint investigation for elder group homes, assisted living facilities, or adult day services, will be made public. This is already the case for nursing homes. Currently, the findings of fact in a monitoring evaluation or complaint investigation for elder group homes, assisted living facilities, or adult day services are not made public until the conclusion of all administrative appeals processes.

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## Districts Must Start Development of Core Curriculum

Starting July 1, 2008, school districts must begin development of the Iowa Model Core Curriculum. Senate File 2216 mandates that all accredited Iowa school districts start the implementation process on a statewide curriculum.

Iowa is currently the only state that does not have any mandatory statewide measures or standards for curriculum and teaching. 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.

Core curriculum was already developed for use in grades nine

through twelve. About half of Iowa's school districts have already been using this model. This will allow districts to aid each other in the process of implementation.

The department of education was required previously to develop core curriculum for grades kindergarten through eight in order to make the Iowa Core Curriculum fluid for K-12 education. The core curriculum for K-8 was completed in 2007.

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 students 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 stud-

ies. Also included in the high school core curriculum will be the core content standards and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills.

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/>.

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## Iowa Receives \$1.2 Million for REAL ID

The federal Department of Homeland Security announced over \$79 million in competitive grants as part of the federal fiscal year (FY) 2008 REAL Demonstration Grant Program. The grants consist of \$31.3 million for the REAL ID Demonstration Grant Program issued in December 2007. Another \$50 million was provided as part of the FY 2008 omnibus appropria-

tions. The additional \$50 million was combined with the December 2007 grant and the deadline was extended. Iowa received \$1.211 million from the FY 2008 REAL ID Demonstration Grant.

The grants are intended to foster standardization by states in verifying an applicant's information with other states and to identify

procedures that can be used by all states, while still protecting personal identification information. The grant can be used for checking motor records in other states to insure that applicants do not hold multiple licenses and for verification against federal records, such as to check immigration status.

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## Supreme Court Seeking Comment on Witness Rules

The Iowa Supreme Court is seeking public comment on changes to the Rules of Criminal Procedure regarding information on witnesses that must be provided in the minutes of evidence. The issue arose in Story County earlier this year when a District Court Judge ruled that police officers who are called as witnesses in criminal cases must provide their home address. This promoted concerns about the safety of the officers' families.

The Supreme Court is recommending that the Iowa Rules of Criminal Procedure 2.4(6) and 2.5(3) be amended to change the information that is required to be provided on witnesses. The pro-

posed rule change would require the minutes of evidence to include the name and place of residence or place of business of a witness.

Under the previous rules, the minutes of evidence were required to include the name and place of residence of a witness, with no provision to substitute the place of business as an address for a witness. Additionally, the rules previously required the minutes of evidence to include the occupation of a witness.

Copies of the proposed changes can be found at <http://www.judicial.state.ia.us/Supreme Court/Orders>. Copies are available at the office of the Clerk

of the Supreme Court. Any interested organization, agency, or person may submit written comments by July 23, 2008.

Comments can be submitted via email to [rules.comment@jb.state.ia.us](mailto:rules.comment@jb.state.ia.us). The email must include "Criminal Rules" in the subject line of the email and must be sent as an attachment to the email in Microsoft Word format. Comments should refer to the specific rule number to which the comments are directed. Comments can be mailed to the Clerk of the Supreme Court, 1111 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319.

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## Veterans Cemetery Dedication Ceremony

The Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs announced the dedication ceremony of the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on July 3, 2008. The dedication will begin at 1:00 pm at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery near

Van Meter, and will feature a keynote address by Governor Culver. The ceremony will also include comments by members of the Iowa Congressional delegation and representatives from the United States

Department of Veterans Affairs. The ceremony will coincide with many Fourth of July celebrations throughout the state that honor veterans and our nation.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to be present at this special event. The public may enter the cemetery at noon. Since parking is limited, visitors are encouraged to park at the Van Meter High School. A free shuttle service will be provided to transport guests from the school to the ceremony.

Immediately following the dedication, refreshments will be served and the grounds and Administration Building will open for self-guided tours.

**Fallen Heroes Memorial**

At 2:30 pm, the Iowa Fallen Heroes monument will be unveiled on the cemetery grounds as a memorial to the soldiers and sailors who have given their lives during the course of the Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. This monument is the culmination of the *Honoring*

*Iowa's Heroes Project* initiated in 2003 by the women in the Ames chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, an international women's sorority.

"The Department is extremely excited about the opening of the cemetery," stated Patrick Palmer-sheim, Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. "We are grateful for the support of the Federal VA, Governor Culver, former Governor Vilsack, the Iowa Legislature, and all the Veteran Service Organizations for making this dream a reality."

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery was created through a \$7.6 million federal grant with additional funds provided by the State of Iowa. Construction began in July 2007 on 100 acres of land generously donated by the Knapp and Kenyon families. The first phase of construction has developed 40 acres that will provide for approximately

20 years of operation. Once dedicated, the cemetery will be operated and funded by the state, with Steve Young serving as Director.

Honorably discharged veterans are eligible for interment at the cemetery at no cost; the spouse of a veteran can be interred for a cost of \$300. Currently, the cemetery has over 950 applications approved for interment and 65 remains awaiting burial.

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery is located 10 miles west of Des Moines on Interstate 80 (exit 113), just north of Van Meter, on the newly named Veterans Memorial Drive. After the dedication, the cemetery will begin full operation on Monday, July 7, 2008. The grounds will be open for public viewing over the July Fourth week-end.

**Flood Assistance to Artists and Art Organizations**

Iowa artists and arts organizations can apply for up to \$500 in emergency assistance for costs associated with cleanup and recovery from damage incurred by flooding, tornados, and related incidents. Individual Iowa artists, nonprofit arts organizations, and local or county government arts organizations are eligible. All applicants must be located in a state or federally-declared disaster area. Funds may be used for cleaning, office and storage supplies, replacement of art supplies, or any other recovery-related expenses.

"This funding is available because we received an extension from the National Endowment for the Arts for distributing the Fiscal Year 2008 funds we receive from them," said Cyndi Pederson, director of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. "While we know the amount is very small, there are many Iowa artists and arts organizations with immediate, basic

needs for things that may not even cost a lot of money. Sometimes a little can go a long ways."

The 2008 Emergency Arts Relief Application Form is available at [www.iowaartscouncil.org](http://www.iowaartscouncil.org). Applicants should download and complete the form and mail or fax it to Emergency Arts Relief, Iowa Arts Council, 600 E. Locust St., Des Moines, IA 50319 or fax to 515-242-6498.

Iowans can also visit [www.culturalaffairs.org](http://www.culturalaffairs.org) for technical assistance, disaster response and financial resource information. The information is directed primarily to cultural, historical and art organizations and historic property owners, but can also be applied to most dwellings and collections. Examples of information include:

- Treating flood-damaged homes and properties,

- Working with contractors and architects,
- Salvaging water-damaged collections, and
- Links to nearly two dozen organizations that offer a wide variety of technical assistance.



The Web site also offers directions for applying for emergency Historic Resource Development Program grants.

**Flood Damaged Museums**

National Czech and Slovak Museum. The museum was under water with only the roof showing at one point. The Consul General of the Czech Republic, Marek Skolil, was sent as a representative by the Czech government to view the flood destruction, and will report to the Czech government officials in the U.S. and the Foreign Ministry

of the Czech Republic. In 2008, the Czech and Slovak Museum was the only U.S. stop for an exhibit featuring the events of 1968 when Czech citizens attempted to gain independence from the former USSR.

African American Historical Museum, Cedar Rapids. Cedar Rapids institutions are joining together to bring in a recovery team from Chicago. Conservators are working at preparing some materials for freezing.

Dan Gable Wrestling Institute Museum, Waterloo. Water cam up through the basement to the three

foot level on the first floor. All memorabilia stored in the basement destroyed.

Ushers Ferry Historic Village. Multiple buildings have washed away.

Science Station Cedar Rapids. Extensive damage was sustained to the first floor, with water on the first level up to 7 feet. There were five rows of the IMAX underwater and the projection room was water-logged.

Veterans Memorial in Cedar Rapids City Hall. Civil War era flags were in the section of City

Hall which was flooded. Flags will have to be removed and cared for.

University or Iowa Art Museum. The building was flooded, but art was moved to Old Capitol and other storage locations.

Johnson County Historical Society. There was about three feet of water in the basement of the old school but any collections there were moved to the second floor of the school.

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## Power Fund Awards to UNI and ISU

The Iowa Power Fund Board recently approved two contracts, each to an Iowa university. The first to the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) for their biomass sustainability study and to Iowa State University (ISU) for their 2008 Biobased Industry Outlook Conference.

Governor Culver said, "The Power Fund Board looked at hundreds of applications and identified viable projects in which to invest Power Fund dollars. These are two great projects that allow Iowa to lead the nation in developing new sources of renewable energy."

### **UNI Biomass Study**

The Tallgrass Prairie Center at UNI will research how to use prairies for wildlife cover and energy production. They will determine

the maximum sustainable production of biomass with mixtures of prairie species.

Their research will show the optimal mixture of prairie vegetation for biomass production on non-prime agricultural land for electrical generation. It will also determine the most effective management plans for sustainable use of prairie vegetation for biomass production while maintaining wildlife habitat and other benefits.

### **ISU Biobased Conference**

The 2008 Growing the Bioeconomy Conference is the 6<sup>th</sup> annual conference held at Iowa State University. It focuses on the latest advances in biofeedstock production, bioprocessing, utilization of biobased products, and the inter-

face between the bioeconomy and climate change.

The 2008 conference will focus on technologies and strategies that will allow the Midwest to achieve the goals identified by the Midwest Governors Coalition, North Central Bioeconomy Consortium, the North Central Sun Grant, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Even though hundreds of applications have been received, the Iowa Power Fund Board continues to accept applications. Anyone working to research, develop, commercialize and implement new ways to reduce our dependence on foreign oil may apply. This could include new types of renewable energy, emerging biofuels such as cellulosic ethanol, and energy efficiency.

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## New Ways to Purchase Service Under IPERS

The General Assembly made some changes in the law this session as it relates to the purchase of service under the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System (IPERS). Under the new law, IPERS members are given two ad-

ditional ways to purchase service credits. Purchasing service credits is important because it helps determine the member's retirement benefit.

When individuals purchase service, they pay money into the IPERS trust fund to buy additional service credits that will be used to calculate their retirement benefit. The added service credits can in-

crease the amount of benefits or allow individuals to retire earlier.

Persons wishing to purchase additional service credits must pay the actuarial cost to purchase the credits. The IPERS actuary determines the cost of service by calculating the value of the extra benefits over the individual's lifetime. The cost to purchase service credits varies by individual based on a number of factors.

**News Ways to Purchase Service**

- Members, who have earned at least five years of IPERS service, may buy up to five years of service credit that is not tied to specific employment by paying the actuarial cost.

- Vested members (those who have been in the system for at least four years), who have a mixture of regular service and special service, may convert regular service credits to special service credits by paying the added actuarial cost of the higher special service benefits.

**Cost-reduction credit**

Another change made by the legislature this year allows members to who quit working for an IPERS-covered employer and who withdrew their contributions to receive a credit that will reduce the cost to buy-back that previously worked service.

The credit can be used to reduce the buy-back cost to members under the following conditions:

- If the member received a refund from IPERS before July 1, 1998;
- If the member was vested in IPERS when they received the refund;
- If the member returned to work before July 1, 1998, and worked fulltime in a job with mandatory IPERS coverage.

Anyone having questions about whether they qualify for the new ways to purchase service or the cost-reduction credit can call IPERS at 1-800-622-3849 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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## Governor's AP Conference

The Governor's Conference on Advanced Placement (AP) took place on Tuesday, June 24<sup>th</sup> in Des Moines. The goal of the conference was to provide information to the education community on the role that AP plays in quality education opportunities for Iowa's students.

The University of Iowa's Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, the Iowa Department of Education, the College Board, the Iowa Farm Bureau, and Apex Learning co-sponsored the event.

Education stakeholders from around the state learned about AP in various contexts of learning and education for Iowa's school districts. The main emphasis was on

rigor and relevance, which is a key component to Iowa's educational system and a term often heard during the legislative session.

Advanced courses may be offered, but there is not always sufficient evidence that the courses are rigorous or preparing a student for success. Rigor and relevance are the emerging factors when deciding what to offer and teach in our educational systems and a high priority when looking at being internationally competitive.

Iowa currently ranks 26<sup>th</sup> in its efforts with AP in school districts. In 2007, approximately 7100 students, in 231 districts, took AP tests. This is a change from the state rank of 45<sup>th</sup> in 2000.

Much of the focus centered on geographical limitations. With many of Iowa's school districts in rural areas, the likelihood of AP being offered and having trained teachers may be limited.

The goal is to provide more access and increased interest in AP courses for all Iowa kids. The perception is that AP courses are only for talented and gifted or the elite students, which is not the case. AP is offered and available to any student with the aptitude to succeed in the area of study.

The conference speakers urged educational stakeholders to be advocates for all kids and get involved in taking the steps to provide limitless educational opportunities.