



State Representative Andrew Wenthe

Statehouse News

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Capitol Comments

The 4th of July has come and gone (after two great Independence Day parades in Oelwein and Frederika) and it's really beginning to feel like summer in northeast Iowa. I've knocked 2000+ doors so far since the legislature has adjourned, and this week was the most hot and humid so far. This task is made much easier by the willingness of folks to visit with me when I show up at their doorstep. I really enjoy the opportunity to speak with voters one-on-one at their homes, and get the most helpful feedback about my job performance during these door-knocking outings.

Chief among people's concerns right now is the high price of gas, keeping education affordable, and lowering the cost of health care. It's frustrating to me that we can't do more to control the price of gas at the state level, but we will continue to invest in innovative new technologies to advance renewable fuels that benefit our state economy. The Iowa Power Fund has been successful in breeding the type of research and development of biofuels and alternative energies that will continue to make our state a leader in this important area, and reduce or dependence on foreign oil.

I am happy to report that the cost of higher education has also been kept down over the past two years due to efforts by the legislature. Our state universities had the lowest tuition increase in over two decades this year, and community colleges and the Iowa Tuition Grant for students attending our private colleges and universities also saw funding increases in the past two years. Providing access to

affordable higher education is critical to the future success of our state, and I will continue to work as your State Representative to keep tuition increases lower than the rate of inflation.

Lastly, I am proud of the legislature's efforts to address the high cost of health care. We passed legislation this year that expanded the hawk-i program for low-income families, and we now have a reachable goal of providing health care to every Iowa child by the end of 2010. In addition to this, our health care reform bill, which passed with strong bipartisan support, covers young adults through the age of 25 on their parents insurance, eliminates pre-existing condition barriers when moving from group to individual health insurance, and creates a pathway to develop a plan to cover all adults by 2013. With this legislation, Iowa truly becomes a leader in providing affordable and accessible health care for its citizens.

I want you to know that your concerns are not just being heard, but are being addressed by your legislature. I am proud to represent you in Des Moines, and look forward to heading back in January to continue the work you elect me to do. We will continue to pass common-sense legislation on issues truly affecting Iowans, and make Iowa a place where working families prosper.

I look forward to seeing you in the district soon. I have five more community parades to march in and thousands more doors to knock. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have an event or meeting in your community you want me to

attend, or if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach me at 563-427-4831 or email me at andrew.wenthe@legis.state.ia.us.

Also, please sign up for my email updates and find more information at www.andrewwenthe.org.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, and I hope to see you soon.

Flood Recovery Underway

Now that the waters have receded, the heart breaking task of clean up and damage assessment is underway. Last week, House Speaker Pat Murphy, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and other Legislators joined Iowa City and Cedar Rapids Representatives in viewing the damage in those two cities. Murphy and McCarthy both indicated that what one sees on television does not begin to show the extent of damage that occurred in those areas of the state.

Deadline Extension for Aid

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has granted an extension of the filing deadline to apply for federal individual assistance. Iowans will now have until September 27 to apply for help. Governor Chet Culver had asked FEMA Director David Paulison for the 60-day extension due to the magnitude of the disaster.

This week, eight additional Iowa counties - Clinton, Decatur, Dubuque, Greene, Keokuk, Pottawattamie, Van Buren, and Washington - were granted a Presidential Disaster Declaration for Individual Assistance.

Sixty-two counties in Iowa have now been approved for Individual Assistance, which allows eligible homeowners, renters, business owners and non-profit organizations to recover from the effects of severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that began May 25.

Individuals and business owners who sustained losses can apply for assistance by registering online at <http://www.fema.gov> or by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-

800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired.

In addition, 77 counties across the state have been approved for Public Assistance. Public Assistance funds pay the approved cost of debris removal, emergency services related to the disaster and repairing or replacing damaged public facilities, such as roads, buildings and utilities. A series of applicant briefings will be held for local officials to explain the application process.

Rebuild Iowa

Governor Culver and Legislative Leaders agreed to the appointment of a special committee to help direct rebuilding efforts in Iowa. The Rebuild Iowa Advisory Committee will be chaired by General Ron Dardis, who currently serves as Adjutant General of the Iowa National Guard. The other 14 members represent a broad spectrum of Iowans from across the state.

The commission will report to the Governor and to the Legislature within 45 days of the first meeting. This report will include an assessment of the storms' impact on the state - including on people, schools, businesses, and private and public infrastructure - and recommend initial steps the legislative and executive branches can take to assist in recovery.

The commission will develop a comprehensive long-term vision for rebuilding a safer, stronger, and better Iowa. The commission will continue to advise on the state's ongoing recovery efforts at the federal, state and local levels, and as-

sess progress towards meeting the rebuilding vision.

The commission will also be able to create and appoint ongoing task forces focused on specific issues, and, as necessary, develop further recommendations in these areas in order to support a strategic recovery process.

Job Assistance

Iowa has received, from the federal government, more than \$17 million in Disaster Unemployment Assistance. These funds are used to create temporary jobs, for those unemployed due to the flooding, to aid in cleanup and restoration efforts of public infrastructure. More than 100 worksites have been identified across Iowa.

Individuals can work for approximately 6 months in the program and can earn up to \$12,000. Individuals are paid at the prevailing rate for the worksite, which provides higher compensation than unemployment insurance benefits. To apply, eligible Iowans are encouraged to contact their local Iowa Workforce Development Office.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

The Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) program provides financial assistance to individuals whose employment or self-employment has been lost or interrupted because of a major disaster and who would not normally qualify for unemployment insurance benefits under existing state or federal law. Payment will be made to unemployed U.S. nationals and qualified aliens, who as a direct result of a major disaster:

- No longer has a job.
- Is unable to reach the place of work.
- Was to commence work and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job.
- Has become the breadwinner for the household because the head of household has died or become incapacitated.
- Cannot work because of a disaster-incurred injury.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance is available to individuals for weeks of unemployment beginning with the first week following the date the major disaster began and for up to 26 weeks after the major disaster was declared by the President, as long as their unemployment continues to be a result of the major disaster.

Those counties presently covered under the Disaster Unemployment Assistance program are (by date by which the unemployment insurance claim must be filed in order to qualify):

- 7/7/2008: Black Hawk & Buchanan
- 7/17/2008: Adams, Benton, Bremer, Cedar, Cerro Gordo, Delaware, Fayette, Floyd, Hardin, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Louisa, Marion, Muscatine, Page, Polk, Story, Tama, Taylor, and Winne-shiek
- 7/21/2008: Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Crawford, Des Moines, Fremont, Hancock, Harrison, Jasper, Kossuth, Lee, Madison, Mahaska, Marshall, Mills, Monona, Wapello, and Warren
- 7/24/2008: Boone, Franklin, Hamilton, Scott, Webster, and Wright
- 7/31/2008: Dallas, Davis, Iowa, Lucas, Mitchell, and Worth

The state has asked the federal government for a waiver of all Disaster Unemployment Assistance claims deadlines until August 12; however, this request has not yet been approved. New counties also continue to be added to the list of counties that qualify for Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

Conservation Reserve

The US Department of Agriculture has agreed to open some Conservation Reserve Program lands for grazing in Iowa. The Governor and Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey had made the request to relieve some of the pressure on Iowa’s livestock producers.

Housing Assistance

There are a number of state housing programs available to help those displaced by flooding. However, state officials caution that before contacting any state programs, Iowans should first contact FEMA to inquire about disaster assistance. Call 800-621-FEMA (3362) or visit www.fema.gov.

- www.HousingInIowa.org- This is a resource for rental housing opportunities around Iowa, including affordable units. Property managers are also encouraged to visit the site and list units for rent.
- FirstHome and FirstHome Plus Borrowers - If you used IFA’s FirstHome or FirstHome Plus program to finance your home loan, please call your loan servicer if you are having trouble, or believe you may begin to have trouble, paying your mortgage. Contact Country-wide Bank at 1-800-669-6076 or Nationwide Advantage Mortgage at 1-800-356-3442.
- Iowa Mortgage Help - If you are having trouble contacting your loan servicer and need additional assistance working with them, contact Iowa Mortgage Help. They can assist you in creating the best plan of action to keep your home.

No matter who services your home loan, you can take advantage of Iowa Mortgage Help. Call 877-622-4866 or visit www.IowaMortgageHelp.com.

- Homeownership Programs - If you are considering homeownership, IFA offers two outstanding programs that can help. FirstHome offers qualified first-time homebuyers affordable mortgage financing with a low, fixed interest rate. The FirstHome Plus program provides cash assistance of up to \$2,500 to help with closing costs, down payment or minor repairs. To learn more visit www.iowafinanceauthority.gov or talk to an IFA participating lender.
- SBA - SBA is the federal government’s primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955 (TTY 800-877-8339).

Disaster Recovery Centers

Those seeking FEMA assistance are encouraged to register before visiting a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC). If visiting a DRC after registering, do not re-register because that may delay FEMA assistance. Only one registration per household is allowed. Registration is done by calling FEMA’s toll-free registration line, 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), TTY 1-800-462-7585, or online at www.fema.gov. The DRC centers are open from 8-7 Monday through Friday and 8-5 on Saturday except for Louisa County (10-7 M-F and 10-5 5 Saturday and Sunday) and Jasper County (8-5 M-F and 10-5 Saturday and Sunday).

The Centers are located on the following chart:

County	Name	Address
Black Hawk	Pine Crest Building	1407 Independence Ave - Waterloo, IA
Black Hawk	UNI Towers Center	2003 Campus Street - Cedar Falls, IA
Linn	Westdale Mall	2600 Edgewood Road, SW - Cedar Rapids, IA
Johnson	Kirkwood Elementary School	1401 9th Street - Coralville, IA
Polk	Harding Middle School	203 East Euclid Avenue - Des Moines, IA
Floyd	Charles City Middle School	500 N. Grand - Charles City, IA
Bremer	Waverly-Shell Rock High Commons	1405 4th Ave, SW - Waverly, IA
Cerro Gordo	Southbridge Mall	100 S. Federal Avenue -Mason City, IA
Louisa	Briggs Civic Center	317 N. Water Street -Wapello, IA
Benton	New Vinton/Shellsburg	210 W. 21st Street - Vinton, IA
Linn	Prairie High School	401 76th Avenue - Cedar Rapids, IA
Linn	Palo Fire Station	505 Vinton Street - Palo, IA
Johnson	Johnson County Fairgrounds	4260 Oak Crest Hill Road SE - Iowa City, IA
Jasper	Mingo High School	204 N. League Road - Colfax, IA
Winneshiek	Decorah Middle School	405 Winnebago Street - Decorah, IA
Des Moines	Great River Medical Center	1221 S. Gear Avenue - West Burlington, IA
Wapello	Indian Hills Community College	525 Grandview -Ottumwa, IA
Cedar	Cedar County Courthouse	400 Cedar Street -Tipton, IA
Muscatine	Muscatine High School	2705 Cedar Street - Muscatine, IA
Harrison	Dunlap City Hall	716 Iowa Avenue - Dunlap, IA
Chickasaw	Nashua Fire Station	125 Greenwood Ave -Nashua, IA
Freemont	Simmons Elementary School	309 S. Street - Hamburg, IA

University of Iowa

The University of Iowa has prepared a preliminary estimate of the total damage to the campus of \$231.75 million. This estimate was prepared at the direction of FEMA, which required that the estimate be submitted by July 3, 2008. University risk management professionals and a representative of FM Global, the University’s insurer, compiled the preliminary estimate. However, knowledge of damage in many instances is still unclear. Business

interruption claims are excluded in the FEMA report.

The total can be broken down as follows:

- Building damages, \$136.2 million
- Building content damages, \$55.55 million
- Extra expenses, \$15 million. Extra expenses include such things as the cost of natural gas for power

generation instead of less expensive coal and oat hulls, and leases for space for classes in departments that will not be able to offer classes in their buildings in the fall: music, theatre arts, and art and art history.

- Debris removal, \$20 million
- Emergency protection measures, \$5 million

Fiscal Year Ends Better Than Expected

Fiscal year 2008 concluded on June 30 and fiscal year 2009 began on July 1. Preliminary reports on state general fund receipts indicate that revenue collections exceeded expectations.

Fiscal Year 2008 ended with 9.4% revenue growth. This rate of collections compares with the Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) estimate of 8.8%. This higher rate of collections is a positive sign of the strength of Iowa's economy, despite a slowing national economy.

The REC estimated that fiscal year 2008 general fund receipts would grow by \$540.2 million, from \$6.138 billion to \$6.678 billion. The 9.4% growth rate helped to push the growth in receipts to \$580.1 million, \$39.9 million more than estimated.

Personal Income Tax

In fiscal year 2007, the state collected \$3.086 billion in personal income tax receipts, which represented approximately 50% of the revenues collected by the state. The REC estimated that personal income tax receipts would grow 8.4% in fiscal year 2008, an increase of \$257.9 million and a total of \$3.343 billion. Current receipts are showing personal income taxes up 8.9%, an increase of \$273.8 million and a total of \$3.360 billion.

Sales and Use Tax

In fiscal year 2007, the state collected \$1.910 billion in sales and use tax receipts. These taxes combined represented approximately 33% of the revenues collected by the state. The REC estimated that sales and use tax receipts would grow by 4.7% in FY 2008, an increase of \$89.5 million and a total

of \$2.0 billion. Current figures show sales and use tax receipts up just \$600,000 higher than the estimate.

Corporate Income Tax

In fiscal year 2007, the state collected \$424.6 million in corporate income tax receipts, which represented 7.0% of the receipts collected. The REC estimated that corporate income tax receipts would increase by 10.2% in FY 08, an increase of \$43.5 million and a total of \$468.1 million. Corporate income tax receipts were up 13.9%, an increase of \$59.2 million and a total of \$483.8 million, which is \$15.7 million more than estimated.

Cigarette and Tobacco

In fiscal year 2007, the state collected \$122 million in cigarette taxes and \$12.1 million from tobacco taxes. When combined, these taxes represent 2% of the receipts collected. The REC estimated that, in FY 08, cigarette tax receipts would increase 87%, an increase \$106 million, and tobacco taxes would increase 66%, an increase of \$8 million. Current figures show cigarette tax receipts increased 88.1%, \$1.5 million higher than estimated. Tobacco tax receipts grew 75.2%, \$900,000 higher than estimated.

Closing the Books

Even though the fiscal year ended on June 30, there are financial transactions that may occur after that date, which are attributable to fiscal year 2008. These transactions may change the final ending balance of the budget. The state has two months to close the state's books (until the end of August), with a detailed record of the

accounts to the Legislature by October 1.

The balance sheet currently shows estimates of \$12.5 million in reversions, \$669 million in tax refunds, and a net of -\$16.8 million in accruals. Preliminary numbers indicate that tax refunds are coming in at \$658.9 million, which is \$10.1 million less than estimated.

When the Legislature adjourned in April, it was anticipated the state budget for fiscal year 2008 would reach \$6.062 billion in revenues for the general fund, with expenditures of \$5.867 billion. After adjusting for reversions, an ending balance of \$207.8 million was expected.

Preliminary figures suggest that the ending balance may be higher than anticipated. Receipts were \$39.9 million more than estimated and refunds may be \$10.1 million less than expected. This would give us \$50 million more than expected. The general fund budget is anticipated to expend \$5.867 billion, and this number will likely increase to reflect expenditures approved by the Executive Council, after the Legislature adjourned, to address the natural disasters of tornados and floods.

The state will allocate \$99.8 million of the ending balance to the property tax credit fund to provide funding for property tax credits in fiscal year 2009. The Senior Living Trust Fund will receive at least \$54 million of the ending balance and the remaining amount will flow to the Cash Reserve and the Economic Emergency funds, setting aside \$620.3 million. The Senior Living Trust Fund will also receive any of the excess funds once the reserve funds are filled.

Lottery Tickets for Veterans Trust Fund

The Iowa Lottery and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs plan to unveil the first lottery scratch off tickets to benefit Iowa veterans and their families. The ceremony will take place at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa on Monday, July 14 at 11:00 a.m. The event will be held outside the Gold Star Museum, weather permitting; otherwise, it will be relocated to the Dodge House.

Earlier this year, the Legislature and the Governor approved House File 2359 directing the state lottery to create two additional scratch and two additional 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 bal-

ance of \$50 million or more. Once the trust fund is filled, the remaining moneys are appropriated to the county offices of veteran affairs. The funds are distributed to the counties 50% 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:

- Durable medical equipment to allow veterans to remain in their home.
- Expenses related to hearing care, dental care, vision care, or prescription drugs.
- Expenses related to ambulance and emergency room services for veterans who are trauma patients.

- Emergency repair to vehicle, housing repair, or temporary housing assistance.
- Expenses to establish whether a minor child is a dependent of a deceased veteran, and matching funds for veteran service organizations.
- 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.
- Individual counseling or family counseling programs.
- Family support group programs or programs for children of members of the military.
- Honor guard services.

Regulation of Rates for Basic Phone Service Expired

The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) decided to allow regulation of local telephone basic service rates to expire on July 1, 2008, under terms of legislation enacted in 2005. The 2005 legislation had deregulated most local phone rates, except for basic residential and business service (single-line flat-rate service).

The Iowa Utility Board (IUB) had long had the authority to deregulate rates and charges for phone services, if it found that effective competition existed. It had previously deregulated many specific services.

In the summer of 2004, for the first time, it ordered the deregulation of all local phone rates in Council Bluffs and 25 rural telephone exchanges. The IUB de-

cidated that unregulated entities, such as cell phone and cable companies, were providing effective competition for local phone service in these areas.

Terms of 2005 Law

Rather than let the IUB continue to deregulate local phone rates on a piecemeal basis in the future, the Legislature passed legislation that did the following:

- Allowed the three remaining regulated carriers (Qwest, Frontier, and Telecom) to opt out of state regulation of local business and residential service rates effective on July 1, 2005.
- Temporarily continued state regulation of basic business and residential phone service rates (sin-

gle-line flat-rate service) until July 1, 2008, and limited rate increases prior to that date.

- Required companies that increased rates for basic service to offer digital subscriber line (DSL) broadband in all their Iowa exchanges within 18 months of the first rate increase.

IUB Made Final Decision

Under the 2005 law, deregulation of basic phone service rates was to occur on July 1, 2008. However, the IUB could extend regulation for up to two years, until July 1, 2010, if it determined it was in the public's interest to do so.

The IUB found that competition from wireless, cable, and other carriers was available in much of

Iowa and most Iowa consumers have a choice of service providers.

In addition, each of the three carriers still being regulated had lost customer access lines, indicating competition within their market that would restrain future general

rate increases and ensure that prices remain just and reasonable overall.

Regulation of Standards

The IUB still has authority to regulate the standards of service of land-line carriers, to assure that

facilities are maintained and that service remains reliable. In addition, the IUB has authority under both state and federal law to help resolve disputes.

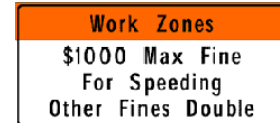
Speeding Fines Increase in Work Zones

On July 1, fines for speeding in work zones increased. House File 2641, passed by the 2008 Legislature and signed on April 25th by Governor Culver, increases fines for speeding in work zones to a maximum of \$1,000.

Under the new penalties, speeding in a work zone up to 10 miles per hour over the posted limit will result in a \$150 fine, speeding from 11 through 20 miles per hour

over the posted speed limit will result in a \$300 fine, speeding from 21 through 25 miles per hour over the limit will result in a fine of \$500, and speeding in excess of 25 miles per hour over the posted speed limit will result in a fine of \$1,000.

Under current law, fines for moving violations in work zones are doubled. Doubled fines will continue to apply for moving viola-



tions other than speeding. The new fines apply to state, county and city public roads that are designated work zones. The Iowa DOT will replace the existing "Fines Double in Construction Zones" signs with new signs informing drivers of the increased fines.

Microsoft Plans to Expand in Des Moines Area

It has been confirmed that Microsoft has chosen Iowa as the site of its next data center. The location will be somewhere in the Des Moines metro area, and the company is considering several locations.

Landing the second data farm in Iowa in as many years was in no small part due to a bill passed during the Legislative session. House File 2233 exempts computers and related equipment to operate a

search portal from sales and property taxes, if the company invests at least \$200 million.

This is similar to incentives passed in 2007 that led Google to invest \$600 million and create two hundred, \$50,000 per year, jobs in Council Bluffs. Google owns other land in Council Bluffs and there is a possibility they may expand further.

Microsoft has said they must have an area with a good supply of

energy, water, workers and fiber optics connections. Nationally, the software giant plans to invest more than \$2 billion this year into infrastructure for these data farms, which process online queries. Last year, they invested \$550 million into a facility in San Antonio Texas. A similar investment is expected in the Des Moines area, and the facility will employ between 50 and 75 workers.

Unemployment and Injury Benefits Increase

The Department of Workforce Development (WFD) has announced that the maximum weekly benefits paid to jobless Iowans and to workers injured on the job has increased starting in July.

The rise in benefits was triggered by an increase in wages covered by unemployment insurance. The average annual wage for in-

sured Iowa workers increased to \$35,513.19 in 2007 from the 2006 rate of \$34,094.47. The new benefit payment schedules will apply to people who file new unemployment insurance claims after July 6, 2008, and to workers who are injured on or after July 1, 2008.

Under Iowa law, the number of people covered by unemployment

insurance and their gross wages are primary elements of a formula WFD uses each year to compute maximum and minimum benefit amounts paid to jobless workers.

WFD noted that only half of those eligible for unemployment insurance benefits have enough earnings to qualify for the maximum benefit. Out of an estimated

labor force of 1,661,000 workers, 1,467,384 workers were covered by the Iowa unemployment insurance program in 2007.

As of July 1, the workers' compensation maximum weekly benefit for temporary total disability, healing period, permanent total disability and death rose to \$1,366.

For permanent partial disability, the weekly maximum is \$1,257.

The new unemployment weekly benefit amounts appear below.

Number of Dependents	Current Maximum Weekly Benefit Amount	Maximum Weekly Benefit Effective 7-6-08	Minimum Weekly Benefit Effective 7-6-08
0	\$347	\$361	\$53
1	\$360	\$375	\$56
2	\$373	\$389	\$59
3	\$393	\$409	\$62
4 or more	\$426	\$443	\$65

Grant Program for Redemption Centers Moves Ahead

This week, the Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) approved the initial rules for implementing the newly created independent redemption center grant program. This past session the Legislature appropriated \$1 million for this program. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will provide grants to independent redemption centers for purposes of making improvements to such centers. A grant can not exceed \$15,000 for any redemption center.

It is anticipated that this rule will go back to the Environmental

Protection Commission on September 9, 2008, for final approval. The intent is to have the rule effective once it is officially filed so that centers can access the applications and funding at that time. The department will post the application to their website (www.iowadnr.com) and make appropriate notification to interested parties when the applications can be received along with other instructions.

Independent redemption centers are nonprofit or for-profit redemption center facilities that have existed prior to July 1, 2008, and

are not affiliated with or in any way a subsidiary of a dealer, a distributor, or a manufacturer. Currently, the state has approximately 100 redemption centers that would be eligible.

DNR will hold a public hearing on August 19, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. in the 5th floor conference room of the Wallace State Office Building in Des Moines. Once the rules are filed and approved, DNR will begin the application process.

DOT Uses New "Click It or Ticket" Signs Across Iowa

Over the July 4th weekend, the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) used the new permanent dynamic message signs across Iowa reminding motorists to "Click It or Ticket – Day or Night." The new signs are part of Iowa's special Traffic Enforcement Program, or sTEP. sTEP is a coordinated effort by law enforcement agencies to increase highway safety. Iowa

DOT officers joined with over 200 law enforcement agencies in Iowa to target increased seat belt usage.

The program is focused on night drivers. According to a study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, of the 15,046 passenger vehicle occupants killed between 6 pm and 5:59 am in 2006, 64% were not wearing seat

belts. By comparison, 46% of passenger vehicle occupants killed during the day were wearing seat belts.

The new signs are located in Ames, Mason City, Sioux City, Iowa City, Council Bluffs, Cedar Rapids, the Quad Cities, and the Des Moines metro area. This is the third of four special enforcement

efforts scheduled for 2008. Iowa's next sSTEP wave is set for Aug. 18-

31.

Reservations Can Now Be Made at Honey Creek

The Department of Natural Resources has announced that Honey Creek Resort State Park is now accepting reservations for the 105 guest rooms and suites in the park's lodge. Visitors can reserve a room in anticipation of the resort's early September opening. This resort, Iowa's first destination state park, is located in south central Iowa on Rathbun Lake.

Reservations can be made on their newly redesigned website: www.honeycreekresort.com. Visitor also can make reservations by calling 877-677-3344.

Besides the lodge, the park offers a 15,000 sq. ft. indoor water

park, 6,500 sq. ft. convention center, 18-hole championship golf course, dining, RV Park, swimming, fishing, boating, and a variety of other exciting outdoor adventures with interpretive programs and activities. The opening of 28 new cabins is anticipated for spring of 2009.

The department said the website showcases amenities of Honey Creek Resort State Park, a monthly construction journal by DNR Deputy Director Liz Christiansen, and provides links and information about local attractions.

Located on Rathbun Lake in Appanoose County, Honey Creek



Resort is just 20 minutes north of Centerville, 35 minutes southwest of Ottumwa and 95 miles southeast of Des Moines. Visitors can get there by taking Highway 5 to Moravia and turning west on County Road J18.

Endow Iowa Grants to Community Foundations

The Iowa Council of Foundations (ICF) has announced the recipients of the 2008 Endow Iowa Grant Awards from the Grow Iowa Values Fund. The goal of the Endow Iowa Grant Program is to enhance the quality of life for Iowans by providing support to community foundations that will aid nonprofit projects and programs. Recipients for 2008 include:

- Dickinson County Endowment Fund, \$15,000.
- Endow Union County, \$10,000.
- Ida County Community Betterment Foundation, \$15,000.
- Wright County Charitable Foundation, \$10,000.

As a result of these endowments, a number of communities

will be able to improve their residents' quality of life well into the future. Endow Iowa provides an incentive to encourage individuals, businesses and organizations to invest in their region through their local community foundations. Each community foundation receives a grant to build their unrestricted endowment fund.

"Iowa has a nationally recognized community foundation infrastructure that is working to build endowment funds in every corner of the State," said ICF Director Angela Dethlefs-Trettin. "Through programs such as Endow Iowa, we continue to build upon a spirit of philanthropy that ultimately benefits charitable projects and programs that are so important to the well-being of our Iowa communities."

The grant program is administered by the ICF in collaboration with the Department of Economic Development. In its fourth year, the Endow Iowa Grant Program has leveraged nearly \$1.4 million in local contributions, creating sustainable, philanthropic vehicles for charitable impact in communities across the state.

This will be the last year that \$50,000 will be set aside from the Grow Iowa Values Fund for grants to improve community foundation infrastructure through the Endow Iowa program. Grants will still be given to community foundations, which do not have a gambling presence in their county, from a percentage of gambling receipts.

Iowa Receives Federal Grant to Help with Job Training

Governor Culver announced that the Department of Workforce Development (WFD) would receive a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to help create a new early warning system that will help prevent layoffs and retrain Iowa workers. Out of 32 proposals from across the country, Iowa is one of only ten states to receive grant funding.

"Iowa has been nationally recognized for our dislocated worker programs," indicated WFD Director Elisabeth Buck. "It is our goal to enhance our efforts with an Early Warning System, one that may avert layoffs and provide further worker retraining services."

Phase one of the project will develop a database for an Early Warning System to assist with lay-off aversions and worker retraining. A Business Peer Network will serve as an information gathering team to verify the data produced within the Early Warning System. A Business Ombudsman through the Iowa Business and Regulatory Assistance Network will provide confidential consulting services for technical assistance to companies. Finally, a Community Layoff and Crisis Response Manual will be developed, including online tools, to assist with mitigating the negative impacts of a layoff.

Phase two of the project requires revitalization and redesign of current programs, including the

Iowa Advantage classes, the Iowa Shared Work Program and the resources associated with the Iowa New Jobs Training Program. WFD will work to integrate the pilot WorkKeys-based Career Readiness Certificate programs and the existing Community College based projects as part of the dislocated worker response. Finally, an asset mapping project will be completed to enhance Iowa's current system and provide educational resources for enhanced services.

The demonstration grant has a three year time period. The final successful product will provide a national model, which can be replicated for dislocated worker services across the country.

Environmental Protection Bills Take Effect

At the beginning of July, a few new measures took effect to protect Iowa's natural resources.

House File 2668 banned landfills from accepting used oil filters and requires them to be recycled. A store selling oil and oil filters must accept used oil and used oil filters or notify customers of locations where they can be disposed of properly. They must also notify customers that it is illegal to dispose of used oil in landfills.

Senate File 2321 requires the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to conduct a study for the implementation and financing of a convenient and effective mercury-containing lamp recycling program. In addition, DNR must submit a report containing recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1, 2009.

Starting July 2008, the Comprehensive Recycling Planning Task Force will begin to come together. 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, known as the Bottle Bill. Further, the task force will make recommendations for reducing the amount of recyclable materials being discarded and for reducing litter. The task force is required to submit a written report containing its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2009.

Hay and Straw Directory

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is encouraging Iowa hay and straw producers to register on the Iowa Hay and Straw Directory. The directory lists Iowa producers with hay and straw for sale, as well as organizations and businesses

associated with promoting and marketing quality hay and straw.

The listing is available to interested buyers throughout the nation and the site is free. However, only sellers from within Iowa are included on the list. Names are



gathered throughout the year with added emphasis now after hay harvest is completed. Available directories include Forage for Sale, Forage Auctions, Hay Associations, Forage Dealers, Hay Grinders, and Custom Balers.

Farmers interested in listing should visit the Department’s web-site at www.IowaAgriculture.gov. For those without internet access, please call the Hay/Straw Hotline at 800-383-5079. The Department will fax or send a printed copy of the application to be filled out.

IDALS is also encouraging people to utilize the Iowa Crop Improvement Association’s *Iowa Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage and Mulch Certification Program*. Through this program, Iowa forage and mulch producers can take advantage of many emerging market

opportunities for Certified Weed Free products. For more information on this program, producers should contact the Iowa Crop Improvement Association at 515-294-6921. More information can also be found by visiting www.agron.iastate.edu.

Renewable Fuels Waiver Requested

The State of Texas has requested a waiver from the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), a nationwide standard. The request stated that the standard is causing severe harm to the livestock industry in Texas.

Governor Culver sent a letter to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting a denial of this waiver. In the letter, the Governor outlined multiple reasons to keep the standards and not allow for the waiver.

Recently, there has been criticism that the RFS has been driving up food prices and causing undo harm on states’ economies. However, there are many factors contributing to the rising food prices including:

- Dramatic price increases for crude oil and energy
- Record domestic feed use
- Increasing global demand for grain and meat in nations like China and India

- Adverse weather events including consecutive drought years in Australia
- A weak U.S. dollar encouraging exports
- Agricultural policies around the world that have limited the productivity of farmers from Europe to Asia.

A study by Texas A&M concluded that overall higher energy costs are a driving factor in the increased prices consumers are paying. Another study by Iowa State University’s Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) notes that the growth in ethanol as a result of RFS will help to keep regular gasoline prices comparatively lower.

Many stakeholders in the renewable fuel industry oppose the request by the State of Texas citing that ethanol benefits the economy in the United States including Texas. Ethanol contributed \$46.7 billion to the nation's gross domes-

tic product and created 238,541 new jobs in 2007.

The waiver could adversely affect Iowa’s economy. Iowa is one of the top producers and exporters of grain and livestock. With the increase in production of ethanol, as well as the push for more renewable energy in the State, allowing other states to bypass the standard reduces the importance of increasing renewable energy sources.

Iowa produces 2.37 billion bushels of corn, valued at around \$9.47 billion. Pork is also a top export with over 18.9 million head of hogs valued at \$4.15 billion. Being a top producer of corn and livestock makes Iowa uniquely positioned to meet and exceed renewable fuels standards.

Texas must meet certain conditions to be allowed an RFS waiver. The State must prove that the RFS creates severe harm to the total economy of a state.

Criminal Code Reorganization Subcommittee Meets

The Criminal Code Reorganization Foundational Subcommittee met in Iowa City this week. Professor James Tomkovicz, Professor at the University of Iowa College of Law, led the discussion of the “mens rea” and “actus reus” elements of criminal law.

Mens rea is the basic building block of criminal law that states

that any criminal offense requires a guilty mind. Actus reus, in the same vein as mens rea, is the second fundamental requirement of a criminal offense that someone must have a guilty act to commit a criminal offense.

The subcommittee noted that Iowa has not put into law (codified) either of these fundamental ele-

ments of criminal law. The subcommittee discussed codifying mens rea and actus reus by incorporating elements of the Model Penal Code, as well as codifications utilized by other states. The subcommittee discussed the relative merits of moving away from existing case law regarding mens rea and actus reus and codifying these fundamental elements of criminal law.

The subcommittee members involved in the discussion will now discuss this issue with the full Foundational Subcommittee. The

Foundational Subcommittee will make recommendations to the Criminal Code Reorganization Interim Committee, which will ulti-

mately make recommendations for changes to the criminal code to the next Legislature convening in January 2009.