



Representative Andrew Wenthe

STATEHOUSE NEWS

January 14, 2010

Capitol Comments

I was honored this week to resume my second term as the State Representative for House District 18, serving parts of Fayette, Bremer and Black Hawk Counties. It is with a great sense of pride, humility and satisfaction that I strive to improve the lives of Northeast Iowans, working hard to serve them in the best way possible. There is much to get done this year, and an even smaller window of time to do so because of a legislative session shortened by budget cuts. However, I am confident we can meet the challenges before us and emerge stronger and more equipped than ever to move Iowa forward.

I will continue to serve on the Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Transportation Committees and this year I add Commerce to my committee list. I will begin my fourth year on the Education Budget Subcommittee, which considers funding for Iowa's public four-year institutions, community colleges, the Iowa Tuition Grant, the state libraries, Iowa Public Television, and a host of other areas relating to education. Finally, I begin my second year as

the Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee.

As the national recession has taken hold in Iowa we face many challenges, but I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work. Our goal must be to keep focused on public policy that will help middle class families and small businesses while maintaining our commitment to the priorities of education, health care and public safety. We must once again pass a fiscally responsible budget that reflects the reality of decreasing revenues into our state coffers. Knowing this, I am committed to keeping the state's fiscal house in order with a balanced budget that does not raise taxes on hard-working Iowans.

This first week of the 83rd General Assembly featured Governor Culver's Condition of the State address and the Condition of the Judiciary address from Chief Justice Marsha Ternus. Given the tough economic times and devastating storms of 2008, the Governor noted the resiliency of Iowans and called on Iowans to work together. His priorities, like mine, mirror what

we've heard from Iowans over the last year -- job creation, strong schools, quality health care, and helping Iowans rebuild after the floods of 2008.

With just 80 days to complete our work this year, instead of the usual 100 days, things are already moving at a quick pace in the House. On just the second day of session, the House Education Committee approved an education package to strengthen our K-12 schools and protect property taxpayers. The full House will likely consider this education package on Friday in order to get it on Governor Culver's desk before we head home for the weekend. We are working to ensure that everything possible is done for schools to continue to get the funding they need despite these tough economic times.

As always, I truly appreciate seeing folks from back home while I'm at the Capitol. This week I was happy to get the chance to meet with some people from FaDSS (Family Development to Self Suffi-



Inside this issue:

<i>Balanced Budget & Jobs Top Priorities for 2010</i>	2
<i>Governor Urging Job Creation; Renewable</i>	2
<i>Investing in Iowa's Children</i>	3
<i>A More Efficient State Government</i>	4
<i>Culver: A Stronger, More Sustainable Iowa</i>	4
<i>Governor Asks Iowans to Continue to Support Troops</i>	5
<i>Chief Justice: Iowa Cannot Afford to Ration Justice</i>	5
<i>Grants Available for Trails, Public Transit, and Schools</i>	6

"In the District"

Saturday, January 16:

Farm Bureaus Meeting at Luigi's in Oelwein, 9:30am

Listening Post at The Rite Spot in Denver, 1pm

ciency), including Niki Rubendall of Maynard, Valerie Koch of Randalia and Krystal Hamilton of Denver. I hope their visit is just the first of many I will have this session. I look forward to seeing you at the Capitol soon!

Finally, I encourage you to attend one of my in-district forums in the weeks ahead. State Senator Bill

Heckroth and I held seven of these “Listening Posts” prior to this year’s legislative session and we will continue to hold these important forums throughout the session. The feedback and insight I receive from my constituents at these forums is invaluable to me in my service as your State Representative in Des Moines.

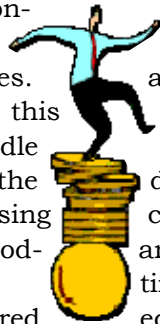


Rep. Wenthe with members of FADSS from left to right: Wenthe, Niki Rubendall of Maynard, Valerie Koch of Randalia and Krystal Hamilton of Denver.

Balanced Budget & Jobs Top Priorities for 2010

The 2010 session of the Iowa Legislature opened on Monday, January 11th at the State Capitol in Des Moines. Top priorities for legislators this year include helping middle class families, balancing the state budget without raising taxes, and creating good-paying jobs across Iowa.

Governor Chet Culver delivered his 2010 Condition of the State address to the Legislature on



Tuesday with similar priorities such as job creation, strong schools, quality healthcare, and continuing to rebuild Iowa after the floods of 2008. Chief Justice Marsha Ternus also delivered the State of the Judiciary speech on Wednesday and said the courts must continue to find solutions to ensure equal justice during these tough economic times.

While these are tough times for

many Iowans and difficult challenges are ahead, legislators noted Iowa’s future looks bright.

With just 80 days to complete our work this year, the Legislature is already moving quickly with an education package to give K-12 schools a boost. Governor Culver is expected to sign these bills before this first week is over.

Governor Urging Job Creation; Renewable Energy

In his Condition of the State address, Governor Culver said we now have the 8th fastest growing economy in the United States. We were recently recognized as being the 4th best place in America to do business - up from number nine last year. We’re number one in terms of the low cost of doing business of any of the fifty states. And, according to MarketWatch, Des Moines was named the number one city in America to do business.

These aren’t just statistics – they are tools which will help us continue to attract good-paying jobs to Iowa, and encourage existing companies to expand.

The Governor encouraged the

Legislature to fully fund the community college’s job training programs and Iowa’s Workforce Centers. Workforce Centers provide a variety of services to meet the workforce and workplace needs of job seekers, dislocated workers, unemployed persons, and Iowa businesses. They can help the unemployed get back to work with services like retraining, employment opportunities, resume writing, interview skills, job training, job placement, and connections to additional services such as health insurance for children.

The Governor also gave examples of Iowa’s assistance to help business growth through the Grow Iowa Values Fund, and other eco-

nomic development programs that have made a difference. These projects have brought to Iowa nearly 3,500 new good-paying jobs at companies like Google in Council Bluffs, Aviva in West Des Moines, and IBM in Dubuque. Since 2007, private industry has brought more than \$7 billion in new capital investment to Iowa.

“Our business climate – even during this difficult recession – continues to outperform our neighbors, putting us on a clear path to recovery,” said Governor Culver.

In addition, to help create more jobs, invest further in our infrastructure, stimulate our econ-

omy, and continue our flood recovery efforts, the Governor and Legislature will be allocating the remaining \$100 million of I-JOBS money this year. Currently, the money is to go for state vertical infrastructure projects, but the list of projects will be determined by the 2010 Legislature.

The Legislature created the \$830 million I-JOBS program last year financed through bonding. To date, awards have been made to more than 1,400 projects, investing more than \$530 million statewide. The I-JOBS program is paid for by state gaming revenues and does not require a tax

increase to repay the bonds.

Finally, the Governor is urging lawmakers to fully fund the Power Fund at \$25 million. This would be the final year in a \$100 million commitment over four years to advance Iowa's renewable energy industry and create new "green-collar" jobs in Iowa.

Today, there are more than 8,000 new, green jobs in Iowa. And, through the Power Fund, we've now invested in 26 research and development projects. These second and third generation renewable energy projects will help us secure our energy future. We've also attracted more than \$200

million in private capital because of the interest in so many of these breakthrough technologies.

Governor Culver said the Power Fund is allowing us to fast become the silicon prairie of the Midwest and the renewable energy capital of the United States. We are now generating 15% of all of our power from renewable sources. And, in just a few short years, Iowa will become one of the only states to be a net exporter of energy.

Investing in Iowa's Children

Governor Culver outlined his priorities saying that all Iowa children deserve a quality education from preschool through higher education in order to compete for jobs in today's global economy.

The Legislature has taken swift action already this week on three of the key initiatives outlined by Governor Culver. They were approved by the House Education Committee on just the second day of session.

Fund Commitment to Pre-School

The Governor stated one of his priorities is to continue to expand access to early childhood education. He cited past actions that have resulted in making preschool available to more than 12,000 Iowa children in 175

school districts across the state. His budget request will build on

past accomplishments by asking for the final installment of \$15 million to complete the four-year, \$60 commitment to funding preschool.

Race to the Top

The Governor expressed his desire for Iowa to compete in a new federal grant program, Race to the Top.

This federal initiative has the potential of bringing Iowa \$60 million to \$175 million in federal money if Iowa's grant is accepted.

Legislation, required to be approved by the General Assembly, will make some changes in Iowa's education law allowing Iowa schools to be more innovative in the classroom, build the education infrastructure our students

need, and turn around the lowest performing schools.

Cash Reserve Funds

The Governor asked lawmakers to pass legislation requiring school districts, facing budget constraints, to use their cash reserves rather than raising property taxes to fund shortfalls in their budgets.

State Aid to Schools

The Governor further showed his commitment to education by stating his intent to fully fund the two percent allowable growth for Iowa's public schools. This two percent will be paid to schools for the 2010-2011 school year.

Additional Funding

The Governor also asked the Legislature to dedicate at least \$100 million for Fiscal Year 2011 from the state's reserve funds to help restore some of the recent budget cuts to school districts.



A More Efficient State Government

One key area in the Governor's Condition of the State address was his call to reorganize state government so that it is more efficient and accountable to the citizens of Iowa.

The Governor has issued Executive Order #20, which put into place changes in state government that will result in more efficiencies and cost savings to Iowa taxpayers. Other areas targeted by the Governor for change will require legislative action.

The Legislature knows the importance of changing the way state government delivers its services. As a result, the Legislature has also made recommendations for change; some of which overlap with the Governor's priorities. The Governor and Legislature are working together in these key areas:

Delivering Government Services More Efficiently

- ♦ Eliminating the least efficient print shops.
- ♦ Consolidating administrative functions in the Department of Human Services.
- ♦ Consolidating mailrooms, and modifying mail delivery policies.
- ♦ Expanding the use of state garages to reduce the cost of contracted private garages.
- ♦ Conducting energy efficiency retrofits for state buildings.
- ♦ Improving the coordination of law enforcement at state parks and increasing volunteer and intern programs there.

E-Government Solutions

- ♦ Consolidating information technology (IT) planning and operations.
- ♦ Consolidating state e-mail systems.
- ♦ Consolidating wireless equipment purchasing and service contracts.
- ♦ Negotiating a statewide IT service contract.
- ♦ Negotiating a statewide IT and office equipment maintenance contract.

Managing State Assets

- ♦ Reducing the state vehicle fleet and changing mileage and vehicle take-home policies.
- ♦ Consolidating the Department of Natural Resources offices in Des Moines.

Improving Financial Management

- ♦ Requiring purchasing from master contracts.
- ♦ Improving debt collections.
- ♦ Strengthening Medicaid integrity efforts – Part One.
- ♦ Claiming federal reimbursement for eligible inmate hospital care.

Legislative Recommendations

Some of the Legislature's recommendations that will be considered include:

- ♦ E-government consolidation efforts led by a Chief Information Officer, who is appointed by the Governor.
- ♦ Require all executive branch agen-

cies to participate in consolidated purchasing.

- ♦ Establish a workgroup/ consortium to collaborate on best practices to implement the best cost savings and savings for the state.
- ♦ Explore interstate and intergovernmental purchasing opportunities.
- ♦ Require all reports to the General Assembly to be submitted electronically.
- ♦ Require an in-depth look at state government every five years.
- ♦ Increase the span of control with managers vs. employees.
- ♦ Expand LEAN programs throughout state government to include identifying and quantifying cost-savings.
- ♦ Eliminate certain boards and commissions and develop criteria to consider before the Legislature creates any new commission.
- ♦ Provide incentives to develop and implement more web-based training for internal and external customers.

Governor Culver has projected that enactment of his recommendations will save Iowa taxpayers over \$340 million in the first year and \$1.7 billion over the next five years.

Culver: A Stronger, More Sustainable Iowa

Creating jobs and helping middle class Iowans return to a normal life is the goal Governor Chet Culver set out in his Condition of the State Address for completing the disaster recovery

started last year. Culver asked that a "significant portion" of the \$100 million remaining in the I-JOBS program be used for flood recovery projects statewide.

Noting that I-JOBS is both a job

creation and flood recovery effort, he highlighted some of the projects that benefited from the funding. In Linn and Louisa Counties, two of the harder hit

(Continued on page 5)

areas of Iowa, there are currently 54 I-JOBS projects underway, for a total investment of nearly \$95 million. In Butler County, where Parkersburg was hit by the F5 tornado, there are 14 I-JOBS projects at close to \$3 million. The communities of Charles City and Elkader will have new fire stations to replace ones damaged by flooding.

I-JOBS dollars also leveraged additional federal funds. The \$100 million for flood recovery at the University of Iowa helped secure nearly \$750 million in additional federal disaster funds. This will help rebuild more than a dozen campus buildings destroyed by the floods, including Hancher Auditorium.

The Governor also noted that the

Rebuild Iowa Office, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Ron Dardis, was recently recognized as being a national model for effective flood recovery. He praised the office for helping Iowa secure over \$3.6 billion in state and federal money to help Iowans rebuild from floods and tornadoes. As an example, he said 3,000 Iowans, who lost their homes, are now guaranteed the funds necessary to buy a new one. The Governor would like to see full funding for the Rebuild Iowa Office.

Resilience of Iowans

Governor Culver stressed that the people of Iowa are resilient and gave two examples. Charlene Shurtz from Cedar Rapids lost everything in the floods. She had

six feet of water in her home, making it a total loss. However, she is one of 3,000 Iowans eligible for a home buyout, meaning she will soon be in her new home.

Cyndi Ecker, a small business owner from Waverly, had her life changed when the floods of 2008 destroyed her floral business. She is now back in business, one of more than a thousand small business owners who benefited from the Jumpstart Iowa business program.

Finish What We Started

The Governor called on legislators to finish the work, overcome the devastation from the floods and tornadoes, and rebuild a better, stronger, more sustainable Iowa.

Governor Asks Iowans to Continue to Support Troops

In the coming months, the largest single overseas deployment of Iowa National Guard troops since World War II will take place. Thirty-five hundred men and women of the Iowa National Guard will be deployed to Afghanistan.

The deployment will be part of a scheduled rotation of forces in Afghanistan. The troops will be supporting the ongoing



ing operations and training of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Governor Culver, in his Condition of the State speech, asked the Legislature to pass a supplemental appropriation to restore some of the cuts to the Department of Public Defense (DPD). The backfill of money will give the service men and women of Iowa the tools they need to complete their mission and

return safely to Iowa.

In October 2009, the DPD, like all other state agencies, was subject to a 10% across the board cut. Governor Culver issued the across the board cut to maintain a balanced budget.

The Legislature joins in the support of the Iowa's troops and will review the Governor's proposal, while ensuring a balanced budget.

Chief Justice: Iowa Cannot Afford to Ration Justice

Iowa Chief Justice Marsha Ternus delivered the annual State of the Judiciary to a joint session of the Iowa House and Senate. The Chief Justice focused on the budget of the judicial branch and the impact of budget cuts on the administration of justice.

Budget

Chief Justice Ternus stressed that the recent cuts have had a significant impact on the judicial branch. The judicial branch submitted a status quo budget for FY 2011, but that budget still requires significant rationing of ac-

cess to justice.

The judicial branch has taken a number of stop gap measures to deal with this reduced funding. Clerks of court will operate in each county, but the public hours and days of the week that

(Continued on page 6)

the offices are open will be reduced. Priority will be given to certain cases, such as criminal cases, mental health commitments, and cases involving the welfare of children. Giving priority to these cases will mean longer delays in non-priority cases, such as personal injury lawsuits, property disputes, and divorces not involving children.

3 Rs: Retooling, Redesigning, Restructuring

Chief Justice Ternus said the courts must undergo three Rs:

retooling, redesigning, and restructuring, to maintain court services long term.

Retooling will effect how the court system handles day to day affairs. The Chief Justice said utilizing a paperless court system will allow for more efficient court administration. Chief Justice Ternus stressed that the court system considers the use of digital technology to make an official record a reliable and accurate option that the judicial branch should con-

sider in light of budget constraints.

The Chief Justice established a steering committee to develop a plan for a multi-option civil justice system that will explore redesigning civil litigation reform. A report summarizing the potential of increasing mediation in family law cases was recently completed.

Chief Justice Ternus did indicate there is no plan to restructure the court system by con-

Grants Available for Trails, Public Transit, and Schools

The Transportation Commission awarded grants to a variety of communities and nonprofit organizations for recreational trails, assistance with reducing transportation-related emissions, and finding safe ways for kids to walk or ride bicycles to school.

Information about each of these grants, including application forms, can be found at www.sysplan.dot.state.ia.us/main_grants.htm.

Recreational Trails

Grants are available to public agencies and private organizations to provide and maintain motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and trail-related projects. The money approved by the commission came from the federal government and is distributed through Iowa's Department of Transportation (DOT).

Applications are due to Iowa's DOT by October 1 of every year, and Iowa has \$1 million to award.

Reducing Emissions

Each year, close to \$5 million is available that local public transit systems may apply for, or co-sponsor with private, non-profit organizations and individuals, for projects or programs that help in reducing transportation-related emissions. Applications are made under the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP).

There is quite a range of projects that are eligible, from synchronizing street lights to expanding transit routes to recreational trails. Applications are due by October 1, and it does take approximately four months for the review process. Close to \$5 million is available each year for grants.

Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School program was created and funded at the federal level. Money from the program is to be used for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements that will result in more students walking or bicycling to school. Iowa receives \$1 million each year from the federal government.

This is one program where a local match is not required, and the application deadline is October 1 of every year. Both private and public schools may apply, as well as other entities such as nonprofit organizations, local entities, and parent-teacher associations.