



Representative Andrew Wenthe Statehouse News

February 15, 2007

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House Passes Allowable Growth

The House took care of an important piece of annual business this week when, with bi-partisan support, we approved an additional \$107.8 million for schools. Senate File 109 increases the state per pupil aid funding, or allowable growth, by 4% for the 2008-2009 school year. That is, an increase of \$213 per pupil, which brings the total to \$5,546 per pupil. The Senate passed SF 109 last week and now the bill is on its way to Governor Culver to sign into law.

The increased growth rate means school districts will receive a total of \$2.149 billion in state aid and \$1.117 billion in property tax generation. The allowable growth rate is set two years in advance to help school districts develop budgets that are more accurate.

It is important to note that the allowable growth formula affects schools with declining enrollments differently than those with increasing enrollments. Many of my school board members and administrators contacted me requesting 6% allowable growth rather than a 4% increase, and made it clear that while they appreciate any increase they will still face tough budget decisions loom ahead. While I would have been thrilled to vote to increase allowable growth by a larger percentage to give schools (especially those with declining enrollments) more resources, doing this while still maintaining a sense of fiscal responsibility was not possible at this time.

However, my commitment to fund education in the State of Iowa will certainly not stop with this vote. Improving education to make sure Iowa kids are ready to compete in the 21st Century workplace is one of the top priorities of House Democrats' Plan for Prosperity. Senate File 109 is just the first piece of education funding for Iowa schools and teachers.

The Culver/Judge administration has recommended an additional \$70 million dollars go directly to teacher salaries. The goal is to bring Iowa teacher salaries to the national median.

Additionally, there is a recommendation of \$20 million for pre-school programs. The goal is to give access to quality pre-school programs so that kids are ready for kindergarten.

These additional dollars will provide another boost to our schools. Combined with allowable growth, the teacher pay increases will mean an increase of well over 6% for our schools.

This week I was invited, along with Representative Pat Grassley of New Hartford, to speak at the Iowa Pharmacy Association legislative day. Over 70 pharmacy students from Drake University and the University of Iowa assembled in Des Moines and I spoke to them on the subjects of how I became involved in politics and why it benefits them to get involved in the democratic process. The legislature often considers issues that affect this industry, and I implored them to communicate with their legislators

on these issues. Pharmacy students make a commitment to go through six years of higher education in order to enter a profession that aids and assists all Iowans. These young

professionals will be performing a great service in pharmacies, clinics and hospitals, and I encouraged them to take their considerable talents and energy and apply these

assets in their communities as well. I also asked these talented students to stay in Iowa – we need them!

Andrew in the Area

Please join Andrew this weekend as he attends forums throughout the community.

Listening Post: Denver

Join Andrew, Sen. Heckroth and Sen. Dotzler at The Rite Spot, 107 S. State St from 7:30 – 8:30am on Feb. 16.

Listening Post: Sumner

Join Andrew, Sen Heckroth and Sen. Dotzler at The Sumner Café, 101 E. 1st St. from 9:30 – 10:30am on Feb. 16.

Listening Post: Waverly

Join Andrew, Sen. Heckroth and Sen. Dotzler at the Waverly Child Care & Preschool in the family resource room at 1600 W. Bremer Ave.

Farm Bureau’s Town Meeting

Join Andrew in attending the Town Hall meeting on Feb. 17 at Luigi’s in Oelwein. It is being sponsored by Fayette, Clayton, and Buchanan County Farm Bureaus, and begins at 9:30

Faces from Home

Once again, I welcomed many visitors to the Capitol this week. These visits continue to be the hi-light of my job as state legislator. As always, I hope to continue to see faces from home.



Andrew with Linda Meier of Sumner at the Statehouse on Feb. 14.



Andrew with nursing students Jesse Gossett (seated) and Eileen Fritz on Feb. 15.



A group of students from Upper Iowa University visited with Andrew during their trip to Capitol on Feb. 13.



Andrew with Greg Pavelka, formerly a linesman for Interstate Power in West Union and father to one of Andrew’s college roommates. Greg was in Des Moines on behalf of the Professional Developers of Iowa.

Operation May Basket

A group of legislative clerks, including my clerk Melissa Cameron, this session has joined together for Operation May Baskets, a bi-partisan group which will be sending May Baskets to Iowa Troops overseas. The clerks would like to send as many baskets to as many people as possible. In order to do so, we are asking for a few things from the community. Firstly, if you know of any Iowan Troops, please email their names and addresses to ClerkMayBaskets@aol.com.

secondly, in order to send packages to as many troops as possible, we are looking for donations of items to fill the baskets as well as money to help cover the cost of postage. If you would like to donate items, please contact the clerk email account. If you would like to make a monetary donation, make the check out to **Iowa Clerk May Basket** and send it to the address below. Along with this week's newsletter, I have also attached a wish list of items we hope to include in the baskets. Please feel

free to email me with any questions or comments about this project. Thank you so much for your help!

E-mail:
ClerkMayBaskets@aol.com

Mailing Address:
Iowa Clerk May Basket
Iowa House Post Office – 2nd Floor
State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

Funding for Veterans Programs

Governor Culver signed Senate File 95, which appropriates \$4 million more for two programs to assist Iowa's veterans. The bill had received unanimous support in the House and Senate last week.

The bill provides a \$2 million increase in funding for the Injured Veterans Grant Program, which was created last year. The program provides grants up to \$10,000 to veterans injured while in a combat zone. The grants are provided in increments of \$2,500 every 30 days

until reaching \$10,000 while the injured veteran is hospitalized or receiving medical care or rehabilitation services authorized by the military. The Legislature provided \$1 million for this program last year, and the funds are exhausted.

The bill also provides \$2 million for the Veterans Homeowner Assistance Program. This program is in the third year of funding, which provides grants up to \$5,000 to veterans to be used as

matching grants for down payments and closing costs for home purchases. The grants are eligible to veterans who have served at least 90 days of active duty in the armed forces, beginning September 11, 2001, and ending June 30, 2008. The grants are also eligible to the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran. The Legislature provided \$2 million for this program last year, and the funds are exhausted.

Vietnam Conflict Bonuses Approved

The House Veterans Committee approved a bill that appropriates funds for Vietnam veteran bonuses. House File 124 takes care of some unfinished business as it relates to veterans of the Vietnam Conflict.

A Vietnam Conflict bonus was awarded only to those who had served until 1973. The recognized dates of the Vietnam Conflict are February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975. Therefore, those serving beyond 1973, the date of the bonus

payment, did not receive a bonus payment for dates served.

The bill creates a Vietnam Conflict Veterans Bonus Fund and appropriates \$500,000 from the general fund for fiscal year 2008. The Vietnam Conflict veterans' bonus is for persons who served on active duty in the United States armed forces from July 1, 1973, through May 31, 1975.

Eligible persons may receive \$17.50 for each month that the

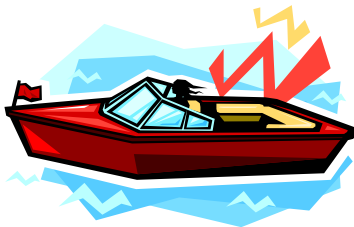
person was on active duty in the Vietnam service area, not to exceed a total sum of \$500. Persons who served on active duty during the specified period, but not in the Vietnam service area, may receive \$12.50 per month, not to exceed \$300. The bonus payments are exempt from taxation, levy, and sale on execution.

The bill received unanimous approval from the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and is anticipated to go to the House

Appropriations Committee for further consideration.

Drunk Boating to .08

Iowa's drunk boating law will reflect a .08 blood alcohol level under a bill adopted by the House Natural Resources Committee. Iowa's .08 drunk driving law started on July 1, 2003. Senate File 49 lowers Iowa's .10 level for drunk boating to .08, the same as drunk driving, and it would go into effect on July 1, 2007.



caused by alcohol impaired boat operators.

Consuming alcohol on a boat is permissible in Iowa. It is the driver of the boat that cannot be under the influence of alcohol. A drunk boating offense does not apply to your driver's license.

The department noted that in 2004, 16% of all boating accidents involved alcohol and there were 26 boating while under the influence (BWI) arrests statewide. In 2006, 20% of all boating accidents involved alcohol and there were 42 BWI arrests statewide.

Penalties

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) noted that currently, you can be legally under the alcohol limit on the water, but not in your car when you leave the lake. They are urging adoption of the legislation to reduce boating accidents, injuries, and fatalities

A first time offense is a serious misdemeanor, which can result in imprisonment in the county jail for at least 48 hours; a fine up to \$1,000; loss of boat operating

privileges for one year; assignment to a substance abuse evaluation and treatment; and a course for drinking drivers.

A second offense is an aggravated misdemeanor, which can result in going to the county jail or community-based correctional facility for seven days; a \$1,500 to \$5,000 fine; and loss of boat operating privileges for two years. A third offense is a class "D" felony. You can get jail time for 30 days to one year, a fine of \$2,500 to \$7,500, and loss of boat operating privileges for six years.

Full-time DNR officers have full police powers and are certified by the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy in standardized field sobriety testing procedures.

The bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

House Holds Public Hearing on Fair Share

The Iowa House held a public hearing on House File 324, a bill that would allow fair share agreements to be considered in collective bargaining. Over 300 people attended the hearing and listened to over 80 presenters on both sides of the issue.

economic development efforts in Iowa.

share of services and benefits they currently receive for free.

Supporters of the legislation, including nurses and police officers, said the legislation would improve safety and health care for Iowans. Supporters argue it is unfair that they have to shoulder the costs to provide services and representation to non-union employees for free.

Current law requires unions in Iowa to cover the costs of representation and negotiation of non-union employees along with their union members. The bill would only allow fair share agreements to be considered at the bargaining table. It must be agreed to by both the employer and employee before it would take effect. It does not force non-union members to pay dues or join a union.

The bill would not affect almost 90% of Iowa employees because there is not union representation at their workplace. It would not force any non-union workplace to become unionized.

Opponents of the legislation said the bill would hamper

The bill does not force anyone to give money for any political purpose. If adopted, non-union employees would only pay for the

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, only about 4% of Iowa workers would be affected if fair share was approved in the workplace.

Because this issue has generated much discussion in the media, as well as misinformation, the Chair of the House Labor Committee requested a public hearing to solicit input from the public.

Crime Victim Compensation Expanded

The House Public Safety Committee adopted a bill that provides additional benefits for victims of crime. The State has a crime victim compensation fund, which reimburses violent crime victims for out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of a crime. The fund is a payer of last resort.

House File 370 increases the payment limits to victims for medical care, counseling services, clothing held as evidence, loss of support for dependents of a murder victim or a victim disabled from work over 60 days, and clarifies the lost wages benefit is \$1,000 per parent or caretaker rather than

\$1,000 per case. The bill creates new benefits, including child and dependent care reimbursement; replacement of locks, windows, and other security items; and transportation costs to medical, funeral, counseling, and criminal justice proceedings.

The bill expands which victims can be compensated to include victims of reckless boating, hit and run boating, and boating under the influence of drugs. Current law already applies to drunk boating.

The bill also authorizes Iowa's Crime Victim Assistance Division of the Attorney General's office to

administer an automated victim notification system. This system is an automated phone or computer notice that is sent to registered crime victims, and their families, when there is any change in their offender's location or status. The victim may also call or look-up information at any time from any location.

The crime victim compensation fund is entirely funded with criminal fines and penalties paid into the fund. The bill was requested by the Iowa Attorney General's office.

Targeted Industries Recommendations Considered

Representatives of Iowa's targeted industries groups, made up of biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and information solutions, presented their budget recommendations this week. This would be the next phase of the Battelle recommendations coming from the economic development report on targeted industries.

The recommendations will focus on the creation of a statewide commercialization entity, aggressively marketing the employment and economic

opportunities of Iowa, and the development of a skilled labor pool.

The commercialization aspect intends to build and connect companies through a prototype development fund. It will also create a LEAN Manufacturing Institute to help streamline Iowa's manufacturing sector through advanced manufacturing.

The plan intends to educate Iowans through business success stories, entrepreneurial support

services, and curriculums to build for the future. It will also attempt to recruit skilled talent for start-up companies.

Finally, the recommendations attempt to connect kids to careers, to help develop skilled talent-pool career awareness. It is recommended starting these programs at the 6th grade. It would also include high school teacher skill advancement, college internships and increase community college training and equipment funds.

DOT Commission Approves Wide Variety of Grants

At their February 13 meeting, the Transportation Commissioners approved grants for trails, safe routes to schools, revitalizing Iowa, and other federally funded programs.

Recreational Trails

A total of five recreational trails projects were awarded federal funding for a total of \$985,000. Awards were given for the Cedar River Valley Water Trail, the Jester Park Equestrian Trail, and the Maquoketa River Water Trail. Two projects were awarded to the

Iowa Department of Natural Resources to purchase a snowmobile trail groomer, for maintenance equipment for off-highway trails, and handicapped accessible vault toilets for designated all-terrain vehicle parks.

Safe Routes to School

This is a federal program that has appropriated money to each state for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure related projects that will, in some manner, assist students in walking or riding their bikes to and from school.

The commission approved a total of eleven non-infrastructure projects that totaled more than \$442,000, and ten infrastructure projects that totaled more than \$1 million. The non-infrastructure grants went to school districts, cities, and Iowa State University to do an online mapping and evaluation of barriers. The infrastructure grants went to both cities and school districts, and can be used for items such as sidewalks and bike racks.

RISE



The commission approved one Revitalize Iowa’s Sound Economy (RISE) grant to the city of Davenport for the grading and paving of 1,000 feet of new roadway located in the Eastern Iowa Industrial Center. This new roadway is necessary to provide access to Evolution Tools’ new facility, which will retain 14 existing jobs and create 36 new jobs. The grant amount was \$250,000.

Other Federal Programs

The commission approved close to \$4 million in federal funding for projects under the Transportation Enhancement Program. The goal of the program is to fund the enhancement or preservation activities associated with transportation-related projects. The activity areas include trail and bikeway, historic and archaeological, and scenic and environmental.

Under the federal Clean Air Attainment Program, the commission approved eleven grants which totaled close to \$5 million. Eligible projects or programs must help maintain clean air by reducing transportation-related emissions. Qualified projects or programs must be related to highway/street, transit, bicycle/pedestrian, and rail or freight projects.

New Cultural and Entertainment Districts Announced

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs announced Iowa’s newest Cultural and Entertainment Districts (CED’s). They will be located in Cedar Rapids, Elkader, Pella, Perry, and West Des Moines.

Now in its third year, the CED initiative is designed to boost economic development through arts, history and culture. A CED is a well-recognized, mixed-use area of a city anchored by a high concentration of cultural attractions.

The initiative encourages city and county governments to partner with local nonprofit or for-profit

organizations, businesses, and individuals to enhance the quality of life for the people of Iowa. Benefits available to each CED could include tax credits for rehabilitation of historic structures and other incentives that create living and work space for cultural workers, and cultural and entertainment enterprises.

CED's attract a well-educated workforce, and visitors who support adjacent businesses such as restaurants, lodging, retail and entertainment. The presence of arts and cultural opportunities enhance property values, the profitability of

surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region.

A variety of businesses and organizations can be found in a CED, ranging from museums and gourmet food stores to dance studios and arboretums. Iowa is the second state in the country to implement a plan to certify Cultural and Entertainment Districts. DCA has already certified CED’s in Ames, Cedar Falls, Charles City, Cherokee, Clinton, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fairfield, Iowa City, Keokuk, Marion, Mason City, Muscatine, Sioux City, Spencer and Waterloo.