



# State Representative Andrew Wenthe

# Statehouse News

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For additional information, check our web site at: [www.iowahouse.org](http://www.iowahouse.org)

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## Capitol Comments

I hope that this newsletter finds you all doing well and enjoying the summer weather. It is good to be home again. I recently returned back to working full time at Upper Iowa University, but still am staying very busy with my legislative duties.

Over the past several weeks, I have attended many meetings, including the Foster Care Review Board, a town hall in Tripoli regarding the area's possible selection as a Bird Conservation Area, the "virtual groundbreaking" of the Math and Science Academy in Oelwein, the Montauk State Advisory Meeting, and the Governor's Council on Agricultural Education in Ames. Also, I am currently awaiting my placement on one of the General Assembly's interim committees that will be meeting in Des Moines over the next several months. I enjoy all of these opportunities to see firsthand what is going on in our communities, and I encourage you to let me know about any meetings or events I should be attending.

I was pleased to have the opportunity last week to take a tour of Iowa with three of my fellow Democratic legislators, Rep. McKinley Bailey (Webster City), Rep. Tyler Olson (Cedar Rapids) and Rep. Elesha Gayman (Davenport). McKinley, Tyler, Elesha and I did the tour to tout legislation we authored creating the Generation Iowa

Commission. Over 250 young Iowans applied to be members of this 15-member commission, and we wanted to thank these future leaders and ask them to continue to get involved in their communities to help us build a better Iowa.

The tour allowed me to show off District 18 to my colleagues, and McKinley, Tyler and Elesha even stayed overnight at my folks' farm outside of Hawkeye. After the warm welcome they received throughout District 18 (not to mention the great food my stepmom Cheryl fixed for them during their stay) I would not be surprised if one of them moves to northeast Iowa and challenges me in a primary! All kidding aside, though, we had a great trip across Iowa and hopefully informed many Iowans about the importance of attracting young people to our beautiful state.

Finally, I was thrilled to have the honor of giving the Memorial Day address in Hawkeye last month. Having grown up and lived nearly all my life in Hawkeye, I had played many roles in our town's Memorial Day service; advancing the colors as a Boy Scout, traveling from town to town and playing the Star Spangled Banner with the school band at the cemeteries, and simply as an attendee. It was with a great degree of humility that I accepted the op-

portunity to address the Memorial Day attendees.

Hawkeye’s Memorial Day service has always stirred in me deep emotion. I remember my goose bumps as a young boy when I assisted in the advancement of the colors, or during the roll call and rifle salute, or when hearing a far-off trumpet play “Taps”. This somber program fills me with both a great feeling of patriotism and an immense

sense of despair for the many lives that have been cut far too short. The town of Hawkeye does a wonderful job every year in performing the solemn duty of honoring those who have served our country. I want to thank those who joined me at Hawkeye Elementary on Memorial Day, and encourage any of you who have not yet participated in your city’s Memorial Day service to do so next year.

As always, I will continue to welcome your questions and comments this summer so please call, email, or mail me anytime. I always appreciate your input and hope to hear from you soon.

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## Generation Iowa Authors Tour State

The four authors of the Generation Iowa Commission will be touring the state this week. Representatives Andrew Wenthe, Elesha Gayman, McKinley Bailey, and Tyler Olson will be making numerous stops to challenge the future commissioners to be bold in their actions.

The Representatives will be highlighting young individuals who have contributed to their local community. During stops in Webster

City, Oelwein, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, and Davenport, the Representatives will be stressing the need for the commission to be as inclusive as possible. Each stop will focus on a different area, technology, quality of life issues, jobs, and the arts.

The Generation Iowa Commission’s focus will be on keeping young adults, 18-35, in Iowa and recruiting young adults to our state. With over 250 applicants to the

commission, it has drawn quite a buzz. Creation of the bipartisan commission passed 95-0 in the House and 49-0 in the Senate. It is to submit recommendations to the Legislature on crafting ways to attract young adults to Iowa.

All four Representatives making the tour of Iowa are 30 and under and feel the commission will be a valuable resource in helping combat Iowa’s brain drain.

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## Top 10 Investment Scams

The Iowa Insurance Division’s Securities and Regulated Industries Bureau has released its annual forecast of the Top 10 traps likely to ensnare investors.

1. Affinity Fraud. Con artists are increasingly targeting members of religious, ethnic, cultural and professional groups. They may be, or pretend to be, members of the group or recruit a respected member to promote their schemes by convincing them they are legitimate. Investigate before you invest – no matter who is selling.
2. Currency Trading. Governments and businesses use foreign exchange trading to manage fluctuations in international currencies. This may be appropriate for some

individuals, but the average investor should be wary of these complex markets. If you do not understand an investment, do not invest.

3. Internet Fraud. Con artists take advantage of technology to lure investors into “pump-and-dump” stock schemes. Be wary of investments pitched through unsolicited e-mails, instant messages, and phony websites.
4. Investment Seminars. Promoters target investors, particularly seniors, through seminars that often offer a free meal. They promise “higher returns and little or no risk.” But remember, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

5. Oil and Gas Scams. Con artists tend to follow the headlines. Rising oil and gas prices make a variety of energy projects attractive to investors. Most are high risk and not suitable for smaller investors.
6. Prime Bank Schemes. Promoters promise high-yield, tax-free returns to the “little guy” in what are claimed to be financial instruments from elite overseas banks usually offered only to the wealthy, but “prime banks” do not exist.
7. Private Offerings. Private securities offerings under security rules that by-pass the full registration process may be legitimate, but are often associated with fraud. Especially with lightly regulated

investment offerings, one should consult a trusted financial adviser.

8. Real Estate Investment Contracts. Investments in real estate long have been viewed as a “sure thing,” with little downside risk and the potential for substantial returns. An investment involving real estate may be a security, so check with your state securities regulator.

9. Unlicensed Individuals & Unregistered Products. Anyone selling securities or providing investment advice must be licensed. Con artists also bypass stringent state registration requirements to pitch various investment contracts. Check out anyone offering to help you buy or sell securities or providing investment advice.

10. Unsuitable Sales. What is suitable for one investor might not be right for another, depending on the investor’s financial situation. Make sure investments match up with your age, your need for access to money, and your risk tolerance.

## TV Ads Explain Safe Haven Law

First Lady Mary Culver unveiled three television ads explaining Iowa’s safe haven law. The law, enacted in 2001, is intended to save the lives of newborns by providing someplace where mothers can bring their babies if they are desperate and do not know what else to do. The \$55,000 ad campaign will get the word out to more people about the law.

The safe haven law was enacted after a young woman left her newborn baby out in the cold where it died. The law says that no adverse consequences will come to anyone who leaves an infant up to age 14 days at any health care facility.

Since the law went into effect six years ago, eight babies have been left at health care facilities and all the children have been adopted. However, a recent death of a newborn in Florida has raised concern that people were not aware of this option. The mother of the Florida newborn was from Iowa.

The plan to advertise on television has been in the works for several months. The three 30-second spots feature a location – a dumpster, a telephone booth, and an abandoned car – where newborns across the country have been found

dead. The ad then shows a young mother wondering what to do, then saving the newborn.

In addition to the ad campaign, the Department of Human Services is working on a curriculum for school, working to train hospital workers, and planning to provide signs at health facilities. Funding for the project is coming primarily from federal funds and some state funds. In addition, the Iowa Hospital Association purchased the rights to the ads, which were originally developed for use in Utah.



## Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness

Changes to the teacher shortage forgivable loan program will be effective for the school year starting the fall of 2007. The program will convert to a loan forgiveness program and that has prompted many questions from students and teachers.

The difference is that, in the past, students received loans while in college and then part or all of their repayments were forgiven if they taught in shortage areas in an Iowa school. If they taught in a shortage area for five years, the loans was completely forgiven at the rate of 20% per year. The shortage areas are determined an-

nually by the director of the department of education.

The new loan forgiveness program does not provide loans while a student is in college. Instead, a teacher working in Iowa in a shortage area will apply for help repaying any loans he or she took out.

The annual forgiveness is equal to 20 percent of the teacher’s federally guaranteed loan balance or the resident tuition rate at a regent school, whichever is less. Loan forgiveness is limited to five annual payments. The teacher must apply annually for loan forgiveness for that year.

Students who were enrolled in the old forgivable loan program prior to the 2007-2008 school year will still be eligible for that program. Students who apply for this coming school year will not be eligible for the old program but will be eligible for the new program when they begin teaching.

The College Student Aid Commission currently has the authority to determine eligibility and disperse funds for the program. More information on the program is available on the College Student Aid Commission’s website: <http://www.iowacollegeaid.gov>.

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## Iowa Gets A's in Health Care

The Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation that studies health care issues, gave Iowa straight A's on their scorecard. Iowa is the only state in the country to get top marks in the five categories – access, quality, affordable costs, equity and healthy lives.

The report was issued just weeks before a Legislative Commission on Affordable Health Care will hold its first meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup>. The commission membership

is made up of Legislators, health professionals, businesses, and consumers.

The report, “Aiming Higher: Results from a State Scoreboard on Health Care Performance,” notes that better access to health care is associated with better quality. Those states with the fewest uninsured residents tend to score highest on measures of preventative and chronic disease care.

Four of the five leading states in the access category - Massachusetts, Iowa, Rhode Island, and Maine – also rank among the top five state in quality.

This past Legislative session, health care was expanded to 17,000 Iowans, including 10,000 children whose parents work but cannot afford health care.

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## Film Incentives Bill Already Paying Dividends

House File 892 created Iowa's Film, Television and Video Project Promotion Program to develop a sustainable film industry in Iowa. Interested filmmakers register with the program and, if they meet certain requirements, could become eligible for a variety of incentives.

It was announced this week that the program has already yielded a film project. Davenport's John O'Donnell Stadium, home of the Quad City Swing, will become a movie set for an Iowa-based baseball story. The yet untitled drama will focus on a player from the Dominican Republic who, inspired by the “Field of Dreams,” wants to play minor league baseball in Iowa.

There will be local casting for smaller roles in the film, and peo-

ple will be needed for the O'Donnell game scenes. The producers hope to play the movie at film festivals, including the Sundance event in Utah, before the target release date in 2009.

The movie will be the first film project made in the state since the film incentive package was signed into law last month. The program provides the producer of a film made in Iowa a 25% credit for certain qualified expenditures, a third party a 25% credit for an investment in a film, and allows an Iowa business to exclude 100% of their profits for selling, renting or furnishing items or services directly related to a film project.

The incentives could have a significant impact on economic

development and tourism in Iowa. Filmed in Cedar Rapids, “The Final Season,” based on the Norway state baseball championship team, spent \$1 million on production, while its cast and crew spent an additional \$200,000 to \$400,000 in the community. More than 65,000 people visit the “Field of Dreams” in Dyersville and thousands of travelers visit the “Bridges of Madison County” each year.

Other films that have been made in Iowa include “Fist,” “Twister,” and “The Hideout,” also recently shot in Davenport. The incentives will assist film makers with the expenses of producing a film, and make Iowa more competitive with other states for projects.



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## Voting Machines to Have Paper Trail

Responding to concerns expressed by concerned citizens that the integrity of our elections could be compromised when using electronic voting machines that do not have a paper ballot for use in recounts, the General Assembly passed Senate File 369 requiring all electronic voting machines in Iowa to have a voter verified paper trail.

This will allow voters to verify their votes prior to casting their ballot. The paper record will then be available for use in the case of a recount.

Senate File 369 requires a voter verified paper trail on voting machines. It also requires counties, when replacing the direct recording

electronic (DRE) voting machine, to replace them with a ballot marking device or an optical scan machine. The bill requires all machines to include a voter verified paper audit trail by the election of November 4, 2008.

### \$2 Million Allocated

The Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure bill, House File 911, allocates \$2 million to the Secretary of State to reimburse counties for costs incurred in complying with this law. County boards of supervisors are required to submit a resolution to the Office of Secretary of State Mike Mauro declaring the method by which the county intends to comply with the verified paper trail

requirement. The resolution is to be submitted by June 15, 2007.

The bill further requires a receipt to be submitted by the counties documenting the amount of money expended in complying with this requirement. Reimbursements will not exceed the amount allotted to the county by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is required to submit a report to the Administration and Regulation Appropriations subcommittee by

December 31, 2007, regarding expenditures from this appropriation as well as recommendations as to whether waiver provisions to the counties should be enacted if voting machines or equipment are not available for purchase and can not be received by the counties by the November 4, 2008, General Election, the date that all electronic voting machines are required to be equipped with the paper ballot.

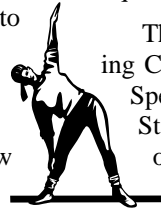
## Commission on Wellness and Healthy Living

Lt. Governor Patty Judge announced a new five-member commission that will focus on wellness and healthy living in Iowa. The commissioners are from across the state and the Iowa Department of Public Health.

According to the Lt. Governor's office, several wellness forums will be held this summer in cities and towns across Iowa. The ideas generated out of those meet-

ings will be compiled in a report to outline best practices in the areas of health and wellness, and to identify areas of concern.

They want to hear Iowans' ideas and potentially use these ideas to introduce new policy initiatives. They believe it is time we start talking about living healthier lives and ways we can improve wellness



ahead of developing problems that require doctor's care.

The Wellness and Healthy Living Commissioners are Dr. Selden Spencer of Ames, Chair; former State Senator Maggie Tinsman of Bettendorf; Sharon Yearous of Cedar Rapids, a school nurse; Public Health Director Kim Dorn of Marion County; and businessman Art Silva of Sioux City.

## Cell Phones Able to Receive Amber Alerts

If your cell phone or wireless device is able to receive a text message, you can register to receive amber alerts by text messages. The Department of Public Safety and the Iowa Utilities Board have joined together to promote this availability and to encourage Iowans to sign up to receive the amber alerts. Eugene T. Meyer,

Commissioner of the Dept. of Public Safety, stated that the odds of finding an abducted child increase with each person looking for that child.

This service is free, and the information provided by you to receive the amber alerts will remain confidential. Persons wanting to

sign up need to visit [www.wirelessamberalert.org](http://www.wirelessamberalert.org). You will be asked to submit your phone number and your zip code. Since the Iowa Amber Alerts are issued statewide, you will receive alerts from all over the state. If you would like to find out more about Iowa's Amber Alert Plan, please visit [www.iowaamberalert.org](http://www.iowaamberalert.org).

## Do Not Forget 511 When Traveling This Summer

Many Iowans dialed 511, or logged onto [www.511ia.org](http://www.511ia.org), on their phones throughout the winter to receive updates on road conditions. Now that construction season is going strong, the Department of Transportation wants to remind people that they can still use 511 to

access important information. If you are planning to travel somewhere in Iowa, 511 will inform you of accidents, roadwork, and detours.

If your road travels take you beyond Iowa's borders, you may

want to visit [www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov), which will give you access to road construction and closures in other states. The website is provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

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## Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce to Continue

The Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce (ITW) decided unanimously to continue their mission of seeing that Iowa's students are prepared with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. This decision was made despite the fact that there will be no state funding provided this year.

ITW was created in 2005 as a nonprofit entity at the direction of the Iowa Legislature. The board of directors consists of fifteen business and education leaders from throughout the State.

As part of the Legislative charge, the General Assembly

stated that Iowa's children are its greatest asset. Therefore the State needed to improve the future for these children through educational efforts that were bold initiatives in the global environment.

The goal of ITW was to review and assess the current educational standards to determine student achievement and workforce needs. As part of the determination, the group makes recommendations to the General Assembly on an annual basis.

For the first two years after ITW was created, state funds were

allocated that required a private monetary match. In the 2007 legislative session, no state funds were appropriated. This left the group with approximately \$321,000 for operations until state funding is discussed in 2008 session.

At the last meeting, the members of the board discussed continuing with its mission or dissolving based on lack of funds. However, with the appointment of new members and an end goal of having students globally competitive, the members voted to continue and seek out private sources of funding.

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## New Bobcat Hunting Season Proposed

The Department of Natural Resources is proposing a limited bobcat hunting or trapping season in southern Iowa starting November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The season ends when 150 bobcats are taken, as determined by a harvest reporting system, or January 31, 2009, whichever occurs first.

The department has said this will be the first official bobcat season ever in Iowa. They noted their wildlife biologists have said the bobcat population in Iowa is doing extremely well. They are now found in about 75 counties.

Hunting or trapping of bobcats will be allowed in the following counties in southern Iowa: Adams, Appanoose, Clarke, Davis, Deca-

tur, Des Moines, Fremont, Henry, Jefferson, Lee, Lucas, Mills, Monroe, Montgomery, Page, Ringgold, Taylor, Union, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne.

A hunter or trapper is allowed to take one bobcat, and must have a valid fur harvester license and pay the habitat fee. The hunter or trapper must report their animal to a DNR conservation officer or employee within 24 hours. Trappers are given a 48 hour grace period after the 150 quota is reached to keep any bobcat in their traps. After the 48 hours, all animals must be turned over to the department.

The department told members of the Legislative Rules Review



Committee that they received about 20 comments on the proposed season. About three-fourths of them were opposed to the bobcat season.

Most of these did not want bobcat trapping under any circumstances but several stated they would like to see bobcat populations continue to grow and expand and trapping should be delayed. About a quarter of the comments supported the season and a couple asked that the season be expanded to include their areas as they felt they had enough animals to warrant a season.

## Planning Underway to Serve Veterans Better

Now that the dust has settled on the 2007 legislative session, it is clear that Legislators want a plan on how to serve Iowa's veterans better. The legislature looked at

the current service delivery system and made a few changes but also requested some reports to help identify other areas that can be improved.

Iowa's veterans currently receive access to federal and state benefit programs through a combination of providers including the Iowa Department of Veterans Af-

fairs, the federal Veterans Administration, local county commissions of veteran affairs and local veterans' organizations. There is not much the state can do to change the federal Veterans Administration, but there are changes we can make to improve state and local service delivery to ensure veterans are receiving the benefits they are entitled to receive.

In House File 817, which was signed by the Governor and will be in effect on July 1, 2007, some changes are made to the Iowa Veterans Affairs Commission and the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill requires the commission to review proposed rules submitted by the department concerning the management and operation of the department. The Commission is also to advise and make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor concerning the management and operation of the department as well as issues involving and impacting veterans in the state. The bill makes the director of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the commandant of the Iowa Veterans Home as non-voting ex officio members of the Commission of Veterans Affairs.

The director of the Department of Veterans Affairs is required to maintain and disseminate information to veterans and the public regarding facilities, benefits, and services available to veterans and their families and assist veterans and their families in obtaining such

benefits and services. The department is also required to provide information requested by the commission concerning the management and operation of the department and programs administered by the department.

**Regional Study**

The legislature also has concerns about the different levels of service being provided by counties. House File 817 directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study and develop a plan, in collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development, to provide regional coverage for Veterans Affairs services. The plan must include the co-location of the Department of Veterans Affairs staff in Workforce Development regional offices to provide direct services to underserved veterans throughout the state. The plan must foster the development of county veterans affairs offices, yet ensure that the state provides coverage where county services are not readily available. The report and recommendations are to be submitted to the General Assembly by January 1, 2008.

**Needs Report**

In House File 909, the Health and Human Services Budget bill, which funds the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Iowa Veterans Home, a provision was included that requires the Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs to prepare a report regarding the

needs of veterans. The report is required to include a comprehensive survey of existing benefits and services being provided to Iowa veterans at the local, state, and national levels, a comparison of Iowa veterans benefits and services programs with programs offered in other states, the deficiencies in benefits and services identified by the department, and any recommendations for eliminating the deficiencies identified. The complete report is required to be approved by the Commission of Veterans Affairs prior to submission of the report to the General Assembly no later than October 15, 2008.

**Iowa Veterans Home**

The Iowa Veterans Home has been setting aside funding for several years now for future construction and improvements of the veterans home facilities. The \$532,000 they receive from the appropriation in House File 911 will increase that funding to approximately \$12.8 million.

The legislature directed the veterans' home to prepare a report detailing the estimated costs and timing of construction and related improvements associated with the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Upon receipt of the report, the legislature intends to explore funding options for completion of the Iowa Veterans Home projects. This may include bonding.

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## Electronic Court Filing Tested in Two Counties

Beginning in early 2008, Story and Plymouth counties will be the test pilots for an electronic document management system (EDMS) for their courts. This system will require everyone to file their documents electronically and will turn Plymouth and Story counties into paperless systems. Once the docu-

ments have been filed, they will be accessible for viewing over the internet.

While many details are not yet finalized, the courts are in the process of developing rules. One issue that the rules will address is the confidentiality of basic and personal identifiers. One reason Story

County was chosen was due to the fact that there are two courthouses within the county. This will allow judges to be at either courthouse and access their case information on the computer. Judges in many parts of the state travel between counties for cases and are not able

to view case information as early as desired.

Even though it's only two of ninety-nine counties, it is an enormous undertaking. The pilot period

is expected to last around six months, and during that time Plymouth and Story counties will remain paperless. The plan is to have the Court of Appeals be the next

court on the EDMS, after the two testing counties, and then enroll other counties by judicial district.