The second session of the 88th Iowa General Assembly convened on January 13th. This 2020 session will mark the fourth year in a row that Republicans control the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Governor’s Office.

During the interim, there were several changes announced for the House. Republicans have a new Speaker of the House, Representative Pat Grassley. As Speaker, Grassley will have the power to the agenda for the House and work with the Republican-controlled Senate led by Republican Senator Jack Whitver. Representative Windschitl will take over the role of the House Majority Leader, replacing Representative Hagenow. Representative Wills will become the new Speaker Pro-Tempore and Representative Sexton will be the new majority whip. Representative Mohr is the new chair of the Appropriations Committee. For the Democrats, Representative Wilburn from Ames has replaced Representative Heddens in House District 46. The Senate had no changes in members or leadership during the interim.

The first week of any session is traditionally procedural and organizational and this year was no exception. Leadership in each Chamber addressed members of the bodies and organizational committee meetings were held. The Governor was invited to deliver her Condition of the State speech on Tuesday to a joint session session of the legislature. This address traditionally serves as the announcement of the administration’s formal legislative proposals. Acting Chief Justice Wiggins delivered the Condition of the Judiciary speech on Wednesday and Major General Benjamin Correll delivered the Condition of the National Guard speech on Thursday. Legislators left to go back to their district on Friday.

The schedule for the session will be determined by the so-called legislative “funnel”, which through a series of deadlines funnels down the number of bills the legislature will consider and results in a timely conclusion for the legislative session. The first “funnel deadline” is February 21 (Friday of the 6th week) and is the final date for Senate bills and joint resolutions to be reported out of Senate Committees and House bills and joint resolutions out of House committees. The 100th day of the session is according to the funnel the last day of session and this year is April 21. The Legislature is not required to adjourn by then, but per- diem for legislators will end on that date and it is the last day legislators will have staff. This fact plus impending elections usually contribute to adjournment very close to the scheduled time.
The next six weeks, legislative time will be spent in subcommittees and committees in both chambers to decide which bills will make it past the second funnel and which will die (unless they are resurrected by amendment to another bill). Remember that any bills still “alive” after the first year of the biennium remain active and can be worked on starting day one of this session. New bills will also be introduced and be required to pass through the legislative process and of course bills enacting the Governor’s priorities and bills from administrative agencies will also be considered in committee so there will be very little floor debate in either chamber.

Other important dates will affect the session. The legislature will not be in session on February 20 for Martin Luther King holiday. The filing deadline for the primaries is March 13 and the primaries will be held on June 2. Several prominent legislators, including Speaker Upmeyer and former Democratic Leader Mark Smith have announced that they will not run for re-election in 2020. Representative Hinson will also be leaving the Legislature as she is giving up her seat in order to run for the US House. The 2020 election includes the president and one US Senate seat; the Governor and other state-wide offices are not up for election.

Throughout session, you will receive our weekly Legislative Report accompanied next week by an updates on bills of interest. We will also send alerts about legislation that needs your voice or action. We look forward to working with you to protect the interests of the Iowa Speech-Language-Hearing Association through our united efforts. If you have questions or concerns, please let us know.

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