

Bills Ready for Debate

We have reached the “first funnel” of the legislative session. The “funnel” is a legislature self-imposed deadline that requires House bills to be approved by at least one House committee to remain eligible for consideration, and vice versa in the Senate. It’s our way to winnow down the issues that have support and those that lack support. We will now concentrate on those that have made it through committee and thus have support. They will be eligible for debate on the floor. Here they are:

Election Integrity Bill – HSB 93 is the bill I wrote about last week that strengthens the integrity of Iowa’s election system. The committee amended the bill to eliminate straight party ticket voting. The provisions I described last week remain in place: the requirement of a voter ID to vote, the requirement to verify signatures on absentee ballots, and the voter ID number required on all absentee ballot requests.

2nd Amendment Expansion Bill – HF 517 is the bill I wrote about last week that expands 2nd Amendment rights. The committee made a few changes in it this past week to take into consideration concerns brought forward by law enforcement, Regents, and community colleges. The current requirement to have a permit to carry and its length of 5 years will remain in place. Permit holders will only have to take a firearms safety class to get their first permit, additional classes will not be required for permit renewals. Iowans who currently have a permit will be grandfathered into the system. A permit to acquire will be required to purchase but it will be a 5-year permit instead of 1-year. Also, under the amendment, preemption will remain current law, so law enforcement, jails, Regents universities, and community colleges can set their own rules regarding firearms. However, the majority of the bill remains unchanged from what I wrote last week, concerning “Stand Your Ground” provisions, teaching children firearm safety, confidentiality of permit holders, emergency powers, and the “straw purchase” provision. All in all, this bill is a big improvement over current law.

School District Budgeting Flexibility – HF 446 & HSB 178 provide flexibility to local schools by loosening funding restrictions and allowing for more local decision-making. Several school districts have a significant amount of funds sitting in various accounts that go unused because they are

limited to specific purposes. These bills will allow schools to spend these unused funds where they need it most to meet students' needs.

School District “Home Rule” – HF 26 grants similar authority to school districts that cities and counties in Iowa have enjoyed for decades. Currently, schools must ask permission to take an action where no guidance exists. What this bill says is that if federal or state law does not prohibit it, then schools can make their own decisions.

Equity for School Budget Transportation and DCPD – SSB 1124 in the Senate proposes a plan to alleviate “inequities” between school districts in transportation costs and in District Cost Per Pupil.

School Board Elections – HF 166 changes the date for school board elections, which is currently in September, to the same date as city elections in odd-numbered years.

Computer Science Education Bill – HF 507 lays the foundation for the eventual requirement of computer science courses to be taught in grades K-12. It establishes a fund for teacher professional development, requires the Dept. of Ed. To develop standards for computer science courses, requires the Board of Educational Examiners to set up endorsements, and sets up a work group.

Water Quality Bill – HSB 135 outlines a water quality improvement plan for the state very similar to the one passed by the House last year that is directed at reducing the runoff of nutrients into Iowa waterways. It allocates \$738 million over a 12-year period from existing streams of revenue: water service excise taxes, the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund, and current funding already dedicated to water quality. In addition, farmers will be contributing their private dollars as partners. Rural efforts will involve practices in farm fields and on the edge of farm fields and also special watershed projects. Urban efforts will focus on wastewater and drinking water treatment projects.

20-Week Abortion Ban – This bill passed by a Senate Committee would ban abortions after the unborn baby is 20 weeks old except in the case of a medical emergency.

Lyme Disease Bill – This bill helps Lyme disease patients access care in the state of Iowa by exempting from disciplinary action a medical provider if the only reason is that they have recommended or provided a certain treatment for Lyme disease.

Step Therapy Bill – HF 233 allows a doctor to bypass the step therapy protocols required by insurance companies to cover a patient in certain situations. This will allow a patient and their doctor to make the decision on the best treatment for their individual situation.

Mental Health Bed Tracking System – This bill makes it mandatory for hospitals to utilize the bed tracking system so that public safety officers and others can find more available and timely placements for inpatient psychiatric patients.

Stroke Database Bill – This bill requires a database be kept for stroke patients to assist them in their care, rehabilitation, and recovery.

Indoor Tanning Bill – This bill prohibits indoor tanning for people under age 17. The impetus for this bill is the proven link between indoor tanning and certain kinds of skin cancer.

Cannabidiol (Medical Marijuana) Bill – HSB 164 removes the sunset on the current cannabidiol law, which means that an intractable epilepsy patient with a card authorizing them to possess cannabidiol oil without fear of arrest, will continue to be able to do so. Additionally, the bill specifies that as soon as the federal FDA approves Epidiolex, a cannabidiol oil, (expected by the end of 2017) then immediately cannabidiol (with no THC) would be rescheduled as a Schedule II drug and be approved for legal use through pharmacies in Iowa.

Sanctuary Cities Bill – HF 265 requires the state, cities, counties, and colleges to comply with federal immigration law.

Drunk Driving Bill – HSB 109 would allow a city or county to set up a “24/7 Sobriety” program. Under this program a judge could refer a convicted OWI offender to participate in a 24/7 Sobriety program, which also includes the requirement to install an interlock ignition device. This program requires the offender to be checked twice a day for sobriety with

immediate sanctions (jail time) applied if they fail the test. The cost of the program would be paid for by the offenders.

Hands-Free Bill – HSB 139 makes illegal the touching of electronic communications devices such as cell phone, PDA's, and computers while driving. It requires any use of these devices to be in a hands-free mode.

Traffic Cameras – There are a couple options out there. One is a complete ban on traffic cameras and the other is more restricted use, which includes having to demonstrate traffic safety would be improved by their use.

Highway Protest Bill – SSB 1135 would increase the penalties for those protesting by blocking highways so that traffic cannot get through.

Bike Safety Bill – HSB 130 requires a driver to pass to the left of a bicyclist in the adjacent travel lane or on the opposite side of the roadway until safely clear of the bicyclist. The committee amended the bill to remove the requirement for daytime lights.

Workers Compensation Bill – HSB 169 is designed to bring Iowa worker compensation law back into balance by making clarifications to cause the law to be used as it was intended originally. Over the past 10 years the cost of workers' compensation in Iowa has drastically increased, easily exceeding that of our neighboring states. The bill is designed to compensate workers fairly who are injured on the job and at the same time curb abuses in the system that are driving up costs.

Cities and Counties Preemption – Among other things, HF 295 specifies that the state has jurisdiction over establishing a minimum wage, thus clarifying state law and aligning with the understanding that setting a minimum wage has always been a federal and a state issue.

Convention of States – HJR 11 is an application to Congress to call for a constitutional convention to propose amendments to the U.S. Constitution that would impose fiscal restraints on the federal government and limit its power and jurisdiction. This is following the procedure laid out in Article V of the U.S. Constitution.

Fireworks Bill – This would legalize the use of fireworks in Iowa.

Feel free to contact me with ideas, thoughts, and concerns. My phone is 319-987-3021 or you can email me at sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov . I want to hear what you are thinking and will listen to your input. Together we will work to make a difference for the future of Iowa. Thank you very much for the honor of representing you!

Sincerely,

Sandy