

More Bills Passed by House

Private Property Rights - The House took a strong stand for private property rights with the passage of HF 603 this past week. For many years, we have attempted to advance legislation that protects the rights of private property owners, only to see those efforts die in the Senate. This year we are optimistic that we will achieve this goal. This bill centers on the issue of eminent domain. The first area stems from the Rock Island Clean Line (RICL) issue and ensures that eminent domain cannot be used for private economic development by adding merchant lines (such as RICL is) to the definition of private economic development. The second area addresses an issue in southwest Iowa and addresses the taking of private land for the creation of a lake by saying 80% of landowners must agree to voluntarily sell their property before eminent domain can be used.

Exceptions to Step Therapy (“fail first”) Insurance Policies - HF 233 will give patients and medical providers more control over their healthcare. The bill provides a number of exceptions so that patients can get the medicine they need without having to go through requirements by insurance companies to use treatments that aren’t effective as a way for them to save money. Patients will be able to get the medications that their doctors recommend without having to go through a number of ineffective treatments first.

Protecting Victims of Domestic Abuse and Stalking – We passed HF 263, which ensures that habitual domestic abusers serve a minimum amount of time in prison. This will provide survivors and victims of abuse with more time to remove themselves from a bad situation while abusers serve their sentence.

Classifying Palmer Amaranth as a Noxious Weed – This classification makes it illegal to bring this plant’s seeds into the state and allows county weed commissioners to be more aggressive in combating this invasive plant. This “super weed” has spread to 82 out of the state’s 99 counties, can reach 7 feet in height and chokes out other vegetation. It can have severe impact on the production rate of crops and can be quite difficult to kill. ISU experts say if Palmer amaranth gets established in a corn field it can stifle yields by 90% and soybean yields by 80%.

Law Enforcement Officers as Driver's Education Instructors – Currently law enforcement officers can teach driver's education behind-the-wheel, but not in a classroom setting. Under this bill they will be allowed to teach driver's education in a classroom setting provided they meet the requirements set by the Board of Educational Examiners. This is designed to address the shortage of driver's education instructors.

High School Equivalency Programs – This bill allows the Dept. of Education to develop other pathways to a high school degree other than just taking the HiSET exam (formerly the GED). Other courses or academic credentials of equal or greater rigor can be counted toward a high school diploma for someone who did not get their diploma the traditional way and later wants to get it.

County Compensation Boards – Under HF 528 county compensation boards are abolished and those duties will revert to the county boards of supervisors.

Pro-Life Legislation Advances

Last week we passed out of the House Human Resources Committee a bill that protects the right to life for the unborn baby from 20 weeks forward. This is certainly a great start on protecting the life of the unborn. Some of my colleagues and I worked very hard on a Life at Conception (Right to life begins at conception) bill and then on a Heartbeat (Right to life begins when the unborn baby's heartbeat is detected) bill. But in the end we could not get the support we needed for those bills, coming very close but not quite enough on the Heartbeat bill. However, we did get the 20-week bill out of committee. If signed into law, this will save one baby each week in the state of Iowa. We cannot underestimate the value of that little one's life and what he/she brings to us. We do not want to cut ourselves off from the blessings that God wants to give us. That little unborn baby is truly deserving of the protection of his/her right to life under our Constitution.

The bill allows for exceptions in situations where the mother's or baby's life is threatened or there is a medical emergency.

A 20-week life protection bill such as this is similar to that of 20 other states. Most have been allowed to stand by the courts.

In the House we have attempted to advance pro-life legislation in the past but were consistently blocked by the Senate. With a new makeup in the Senate this year, Iowans can expect the legislature to advance protections for the unborn.

There is a building momentum in the pro-life direction, not just in the 5 years I have served in the Statehouse, but over several decades. And while I would like to see a greater protection put into place, it is very encouraging in that this is the most substantial piece of legislation ever advanced to protect the unborn in Iowa's history! However, the struggle is not over; we will continue to press on.

FY 18 Budget Update

Gov. Branstad released his revised budget proposal for FY 18 last week. The Governor's revised FY 18 budget spends \$173 million less than his original budget proposal released in January. But it still increases FY 18 spending \$24 million over the FY 17 budget. The Governor borrows \$131.1 million from the Cash Reserve Fund (CRF) to cover the shortfall in FY 17 revenue. The Governor's plan to repay the Cash Reserve is zero dollars in FY 18 and \$26.3 million in FY 19. The plan then uses \$104.8 million of the FY 18 ending balance (created by the 1% of revenues the state cannot legally spend according to the 99% expenditure limitation law) to cover the balance of borrowed money from the CRF.

K-12 education will be receiving the largest funding increase in all areas of government in the governor's budget. Many other areas will see budget reductions.

The House will release budget targets as soon as possible and then begin the process of approving the FY 18 budget. We expect to have a plan that pays back any money borrowed from the Cash Reserve Fund. Those repayments will be made in both FY 18 and FY 19 budgets.

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