

End of Session Legislative Update

Part 2

I ran out of space in the last newsletter to summarize important legislation that has become law. So I will pick it up with this newsletter:

Mental Health Funding Inequity: Counties will be allowed to equalize mental health property tax levy rates within their region. This change shifts the funding for mental health to be spread more equitably between the counties, all under the state cap.

Income and Asset Verification for Medicaid Eligibility – This bill pushes DHS forward to a system to better verify the income and assets of those applying for Medicaid benefits. This would include making sure applicants aren't already receiving benefits in another state.

Lyme Disease: This allows Lyme disease patients better access to medical providers by providing them exemptions from disciplinary action if the only reason is that they have prescribed a certain treatment for Lyme disease. We recognize that standards of care for treating Lyme disease are evolving as the medical community is still learning about how to diagnose and treat the disease.

Medical Cannabidiol: We expanded the number of diseases/conditions that are allowed to be treated with medical cannabidiol and allow doctors, not just neurologists, to make a "recommendation" to patients. We created an advisory board to recommend changes to the diseases/conditions cannabidiol will be allowed to treat. The cannabidiol cannot contain more than 3% THC, which is the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana that causes the "high". The state will also allow the highly regulated in-state manufacture and dispensing as well as bordering-state, out-of-state sellers to sell to qualifying Iowans.

"Right to Try": This allows terminal patients to try a treatment option that has completed Phase I of the FDA process.

Step Therapy Override: This allows exceptions for patients to override insurance "step" requirements to be able to get the medication they need.

Insurance Coverage for Autism: This extends insurance coverage for autism treatments to Iowa families.

Mammogram Bill: Facilities that provide mammograms must include information on breast density in reports sent to patients.

Stroke Database – The state’s largest hospitals will be required to contribute information they have on the treatment and care of stroke patients to the U of I database so all health care providers can use it to help their stroke patients.

3rd Grade Retention and Summer School Reading Program – We repealed the state conditional requirement to retain students in 3rd grade as well as the summer school reading program requirement.

Computer Science Education – This encourages school districts to provide computer science courses in grades K-12, requires the Dept. of Ed. To develop standards for computer science courses, and requires the Board of Educational Examiners to set up endorsements in this field.

Iowa Tuition Grant – We removed the \$6000 individual student cap for a maximum award and allowing the cap to go up to the amount of tuition at a Regent university.

“Texting and Driving”: We strengthened our texting while driving law by making it a primary offense. This will allow law enforcement to pull over drivers who are using electronic devices except for making phone calls, using voice-to-text functions, or using the GPS.

Drunk/Distracted Driving Bill: A city or county can set up a 24/7 sobriety program whereby a judge can require an OWI offender to report twice a day to be tested for alcohol and drugs and to use an ignition interlock. A test failure results in immediate sanctions, that can include jail time. Also, a person who is using a hand-held electronic device, and kills another while driving is guilty of a Class “C” felony.

Criminal Sentencing Reform - A person convicted of attempted murder of a peace officer shall serve 100 percent of their prison sentence and shall be denied parole, work release, or other early release. Standard sentences shall be imposed in certain crimes. Mandatory minimum

sentences for some crimes are eliminated, thus allowing the judge more discretion.

Protecting Victims of Domestic Abuse and Stalking – This ensures that habitual domestic abusers will 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.

Protection from Synthetic Drugs: House File 296 helps keep deadly synthetic drugs off the streets, while also making it easier to prosecute sellers of those drugs.

Privacy Protection – A person who has a reasonable expectation of privacy cannot be viewed, filmed, or photographed by a trespasser. The laws on harassment have been updated to protect victims of revenge pornography.

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.

Electrical Work on Farms – This bill provides that a farm, as long as it is not a place open for retail business, is not required to have its electrical work done by a licensed electrical contractor, or have a permit, or be inspected. The farmers can do the work themselves.

School Board Elections – This bill moves school board elections from their current time in September to November to be done at the same time as city elections in odd-numbered years. This is intended to be a long-term cost saving measure and to increase the turnout for school board elections.

Jobs Impact Statement – Agencies must include a jobs impact statement for the rules they make.

Employee Drug Testing – Hair is now an acceptable body sample that may be taken to test an employee for drugs.

City Council and Fire Depts. – City council members are now allowed to serve as a volunteer in the fire dept.

Straight Wall Cartridge Rifles – Straight wall cartridge rifles are now allowed to be used to hunt deer.

Vehicle Automatic Start – Drivers can now allow their motor vehicles to stand unattended while they are running, which allows for the use of automatic start technology.

Repeal of Campaign Election Fund on Tax Return – The checkoff for the Iowa Election Campaign Fund on the Iowa Tax return has been removed.

Property Assessment Appeals Board – More protection for property taxpayers is now in place including removal of the sunset for the Property Assessment Appeals Board.

First-Time Homebuyer Savings Accounts – A tax deduction is allowed for individuals who open a bank account designated as a “first-time homebuyer savings account” for the purpose of buying a home for the first time.

Fireworks – The sale and use of fireworks in Iowa is now legalized for a period of time around July 4th and around New Year’s Eve, subject to local jurisdiction ordinance.

Feel free to contact me with ideas, thoughts, and concerns. 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 again very much for all your support and for the honor of representing you!

Sincerely,

Sandy