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News from the "Extreme Team"

Sign up and follow legislative happenings on my Facebook page <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=97&F=H> .

Week Six

We had another very busy week. The Senate debated several bills. On Wednesday, we approved Senate File 167 <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=250&F=H> , an increase of 2% in funding for K-12 schools for the 2011-2012 school year. Both the Governor and the House Republicans have proposed no increase.

Yesterday, we approved House File 45 <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=220&F=H> . This is a bill that had \$500 million in cuts to many important programs when it emerged from the House. In the Senate, we restored funding to many programs and sent several issues back to policy committees for further study.

We also approved a major job creation tax cut for small businesses and a tax cut for 240,000 working families with Senate File 209 <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=248&F=H> . This adds to our work in working to create more jobs for working Iowans.

The first legislative funnel is two weeks away. That means a lot of time will now be focused on sub-committee and committee work. A bill needs to make it out of at least one committee to survive for the session by March 4. We are still seeing a lot of interesting bills coming from the Iowa House. Let's recap some of the ideas so far:

- Eliminating the bottle/can refund program
- Allowing businesses to discriminate against individuals whose marriage offends their "religious conscience"
- Selling the Jackson Pollock painting
- Elimination of pre-school programs
- Amending the Constitution to ban gay marriage, civil unions and domestic partnership
- Making contraception like the pill illegal
- Banning all abortions

What happened to jobs creation as the top priority?



Support for arts and culture stimulates the economy through tourism and local spending. I met with residents of Iowa City during Cultural Advocacy Day on February 15. We discussed how to better serve the arts community in

Iowa City through public lectures, artist workshops and community events. From left: Deb Dunkhase, director of the Iowa Children's Museum, I, Nancy Kula, director of the Englert Theater, and Mark Ginsberg, owner of M. C. Ginsberg Jewelers, which was named one of the Ten Best Companies Supporting the Arts in America.

Visitors to the Capitol

Mark Ginsberg, M. C. Ginsberg Jewelers
Abby Ballain, Iowa Cultural Corridor Alliance
Nancy Kula, Englert Theatre
Polly Horton, Johnson County League of Women Voters
Dawn Sutter, Johnson County League of Women Voters
Rebecca Reiter, Johnson County League of Women Voters
Pattie Fields, Board Member, Iowa City Community School District
Deb Dunkhase, Iowa Children's Museum
Larry Weber, Director, IIHR, University of Iowa
Witek Krajewski, Director, Iowa Flood Center
Carmen Langel, Iowa Flood Center
Nate Young, Iowa Flood Center
Betty Kelly, Johnson County Task Force on Aging
Bob Welsh, Johnson County Task Force on Aging
Robert George, Johnson County Task Force on Aging
Kice Brown, Johnson County Task Force on Aging
June Judge, Johnson County Task Force on Aging
David Johnson, Dean University of Iowa College of Dentistry
Rod Lehnertz, Director of Planning, Design and Construction, University of Iowa
Sorry if I missed you.

Talking Taxes on "Iowa Press" this Weekend

I'll be a guest on Iowa Public Television's "Iowa Press" this weekend. State Rep. Tom Sands (R-Columbus Junction) will be joining me for a discussion of potential tax reforms during this legislative session. The program will be broadcast Friday, February 18 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, February 20 at 11:30 a.m. on Iowa Public Television. It will also be broadcast on IPTV WORLD (.3) on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. If you miss it, you can check it out online beginning Friday at www.iptv.org <<http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=246&F=H>> . I hope you'll tune in.

Tax Break Puts Money in the Pockets of All Iowans

The Senate took steps this week toward a more responsible and fair approach to taxes. We took a different road than Governor Branstad, whose tax proposal gives 80 percent of its tax credit funds to large out-of-state corporations and doesn't help the small businesses that create most Iowa jobs.

Our plan will help Iowa families and promote job creation by Iowa small businesses. By "coupling" with various federal provisions, the legislation will enable Iowans to keep more of their hard-earned money. The legislation will expand itemized deductions and increase childcare tax credits for young families. It will enable teachers to deduct out-of-pocket expenses for classroom supplies and students to deduct tuition and fees. It will allow small businesses to deduct more expenses and invest in creating jobs. Finally, it will let Iowa corporations get deductions for automobiles, machinery, property and other big items immediately, rather than depreciating them over time. If you'd like to learn more about our plans to reduce taxes for Iowans, I encourage you to check out my 97 second video overview here <<http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=242&F=H>> .

Helping Working Families with the Earned Income Tax Credit

Iowa's hard-working families deserve to be able to make ends meet. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been a big help in lifting workers out of poverty. The EITC provides extra income to pay for important needs, such as child care, groceries, doctor bills and home heating. In the process, it provides an economic boost to every Iowa community. Nationwide, the EITC helps 4 million people – half of them children – out of poverty each year. It is the single most effective antipoverty program for working families.

I support increasing this important refundable state tax credit from 7 to 10 percent. Doing so will benefit 240,000 Iowa households with incomes below \$45,000. This is smart legislation that will make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iowans.

House Subcommittee Passes Bill to Sell the Pollock

I don't know what's in the water over on the House side. On Wednesday, I attended the subcommittee on House Study Bill 84 <<http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42681&N=228&L=217&F=H>> , which would force the sale of the University of Iowa's Jackson Pollock painting. It was unbelievable. The bill passed on a 2-1 party line vote and will now go to the full House Appropriations Committee.

Selling this painting is a terrible idea. It would end donations of artwork and contributions to the University of Iowa art programs and museum. Who wants to donate art when the state will just barter it off whenever they feel like it?

Iowa is not broke. We have more than \$900 million in the bank. There is no need to have a fire sale on such a

culturally-valuable, iconic painting and draw even more bad attention to our state. It's time to move on to more important business like creating well-paying jobs, maintaining our pre-school commitments, and adequately funding our colleges and public universities.

Protecting Educational Opportunities in Tough Times

On Wednesday, I voted with the majority of the Senate to increase basic state funding for our schools by two percent. This money will be used during the 2011-2012 school year for textbooks, heating bills, technology and other necessities that help students, teachers and schools succeed.

I also backed additional state support to keep class sizes small, improve teacher quality, and enhance professional development. It's the best way to increase student achievement and keep the best and brightest teachers in our classrooms.

In contrast, Governor Branstad and House Republicans have proposed zero new funding for Iowa schools for the next two years. That's never happened before in our state, even during the farm crisis of the 1980s. Iowa school superintendents say no new state funding would mean layoffs, crowding more kids into classrooms and raising property taxes.

We can't afford to break our commitment to our kids like that. Iowa families and communities are starting to rebound from the national recession. Now more than ever, it's important to focus on building a lasting recovery for all Iowans and small businesses. In good times and bad, educational opportunity is the best way to grow Iowa's middle class. Maintaining that opportunity is one of the top reasons I ran for the Legislature.

Iowa Students Top National Average in Science

Iowa students in fourth and eighth grades outperformed their peers on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) science test, according to a new report <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=247&F=H> by the U.S. Department of Education. The test is the largest nationally-representative assessment of student achievement in science, math and reading.

Approximately 2,800 fourth-grade and 2,700 eighth-grade Iowa students took the NAEP science test in 2009. On the fourth-grade science test, Iowa students scored nine points higher than the national average. Eighth-graders scored six points above the national average.

These test results are good news for Iowa. A strong science education prepares students for today's workforce and brings high-paying jobs to our state.

News from the "Extreme Team"

Sen. Chelgren (R-Ottumwa) Compares Iowa Preschools to the Nazi Regime

On Monday, Iowans got a talking to from our own self-declared Senate history teacher, Sen. Mark Chelgren (R-Ottumwa). During a discussion on preschool during the morning session, Sen. Chelgren stated that, "as a student of history, I also know the Nazis, the Soviets, a whole variety of groups, a whole variety of countries take their children because it's not just up to age six they're so malleable." He went on to compare Iowa preschools to Nazi mind control, noting that "if it is all about indoctrinating a child, I would use the exact same arguments that the Nazis used, that we should take children immediately, as soon as we recognize they have potential." You can listen to the full audio of the speech here <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=243&F=H>. I think Sen. Chelgren may need to sit down for a history lesson himself. Within four years of making universal preschool available to four-year-olds, preschool attendance increased from only 19 percent to 60 percent. I've visited preschools. All I've seen is a program that's providing our kids with the skills they need to succeed and continue to grow Iowa's economy – not a Nazi mind-meld in sight. Come on, Sen. Chelgren. Let's stop the fear-mongering and start working together to improve the lives of Iowans.

Rep. Pearson's (R-Pleasant Hill) Bill Would Make All Abortions Illegal

Rep. Kim Pearson (R-Pleasant Hill) held a subcommittee this week on HF 153 <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=249&F=H>, which would ban all abortions in Iowa, including in cases of rape or incest. The bill passed out of subcommittee on a 2-1 party line vote. Rep. Pearson pushed for this legislation after reading another bill pending in the House that would ban abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy unless the mother's health is at risk, saying that the bill does not go far enough. As Rep. Beth Wessel-Kroeschell (D-Ames) noted in the subcommittee meeting, the bill is could even be interpreted to ban contraception like the Pill. You can listen to the testimony here <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=244&F=H>. You can read more about Rep. Pearson's work to take away a woman's right to choose and possibly even access to contraception in the *Press Citizen* here <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=245&F=H>.

News You Can Use

"Come to the Table" Local Food Summit on Feb. 18

The "Come to the Table" local food summit for producers and purchasers will be taking place from 1-5pm this Friday, February 18th at the Coralville Public Library. The event will include an update on the Iowa Food and Farm Plan, a panel on the market and current practices, and breakout discussion. For more information and to register, visit www.iacorridor-localfood.org/localfoodsummit.htm <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?>

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League of Women Voters of Johnson County Forum on Saturday, February 26

On Saturday, February 26, the League of Women Voters of Johnson County will host a forum from 9:30-11:30am at the Coralville City Council Chambers. I will be participating along with other members of the Johnson County local delegation. The rest of the forum will be devoted to public comments and questions. I hope to see you there. The forum can also be watched live on cable channel 4.

Financial Literacy Leads to Personal Success

As we all know, financial literacy is an essential skill for success in today's every-changing, global economy. The recent financial literacy report <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=227&F=H> reaffirmed the critical nature of financial understanding and skills.

In Iowa, we understand the importance of teaching Iowa students about personal finances. This week, the state of Iowa released a new financial literacy program for Iowa's students. The online Iowa Financial Literacy Program at www.IHaveAPlanIowa.gov <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=229&F=H> is free to all Iowa high schools, thanks to a federal grant and the College Student Aid Commission's public-private partnership. By learning the basics—budgeting, saving, wise use of credit cards, and smart borrowing—early on, students will be better positioned for life-long financial success.

This new program is a great capstone to the Iowa Core Curriculum's comprehensive K-12 program in financial literacy. In 2008, the Legislature approved a career and educational planning process called the 8th Grade Plan. Through this program, Iowa schools work with students to create an electronic portfolio of career and educational goals that can be revised as they mature.

You can learn more about financial literacy and college and career planning at the Iowa College Aid Web site, www.IowaCollegeAid.gov <http://interspire.iowasdc.info/link.php?M=42203&N=253&L=228&F=H> .



Jeff Pomeranz, City Manager of Cedar Rapids, and Mayor Ron Corbett of Cedar Rapids met with me and Senators Swati Dandekar of Marion and Rob Hogg of Cedar Rapids when they were at the Capitol on February 14.

About my newsletter

My newsletter provides brief summaries of some of the things that I am working on, the work of the General Assembly, and political perspectives on issues. I also use it to announce meetings and how to find useful information about state government.