

Your Capitol Voice

Representative Jeff Kaufmann

Your completed surveys have been pouring in from every corner of the District. What a great opportunity for me to better understand your values and opinions. Thank you. Survey results will be shared in future columns.

There was great conversation at my Listening Post in Atalissa last week. In the near future I will be in your community. See this column for my schedule every week. Work in the Capitol now revolves around newly filed bills and subcommittee work.

This week I would like to discuss a few bills I have sponsored or co-sponsored for this session. For my complete list of bills, go to the legislative website at www.legis.state.ia.us I am intentionally discussing bills this week that are narrowly focused and may fall “under the media radar.” Ultimately the success of gaining a subcommittee hearing, a floor debate, or even passage of a bill depends on the majority party since they control the committee chairs and the Majority Leader’s position. The following is a sampling of bills I have sponsored or co-sponsored.

1. **Iowa Advantage initiative:** This bipartisan bill received a great deal of positive press and has already had one subcommittee hearing this session. This offers one idea to keep our young people in Iowa. This program would award tax credits to businesses that help their new employees with their college debt.
2. **Recycling of mercury thermostats:** This legislation was inspired by Mr. Ibarra’s West Branch Middle School science class. This is another step in our efforts to reduce the amount of mercury in our environment by requiring mercury thermostats to be properly recycled. Disposal in our landfills can be detrimental to our water supply. There is almost universal acknowledgement on the harmful effects of mercury. Rep. Ro Foege is the other sponsor.
3. Last session Rep. Brian Quirk and I sponsored bipartisan legislation to complete the **Vietnam Veteran bonus program**. We have discovered that there are some vets whose residency at the time of their service denies them access to the program. This bill fixes that problem and will hopefully be one more way to say thank you to a group where our gratitude is long overdue.
4. **Beginning farmer’s legislation.** In an attempt to help beginning farmers with the acquisition of farm ground, Rep. Pat Grassley and I drafted legislation that waives the inheritance tax to non-lineal descendants who crop-share to a beginning farmer. This legislation would also increase the property tax credit to beginning farmers. (These credits are actually taken from out-of-state owners who have no family tie to Iowa land.) This legislation was the idea of Mike Boyle from Tipton.
5. For every patient on Medicaid, a **personal needs allowance (PNA)** is allotted. Two years ago the PNA was lifted to \$50 per month. In a continuation to help our Title 19 seniors and citizens, this PNA would be linked to cost-of-living increases, similar to social security benefits. This is not money given to them, but rather money that they can keep for daily living expenses. Thanks to Marlene Armstrong of Clarence for her inspiration on this issue.

6. I have also co-sponsored bipartisan legislation that would direct the Office of Energy Independence to conduct a study on the **potential of hydro-energy** in Iowa. This would include low-head dams, locks and dams, and river flow.

I am involved in many more initiatives and bills, including help to our fire and EMS volunteers, rural school transportation help, transfer of community college credits, smoke-free school grounds, and veterans' benefits, just to name a few.

My interests and activities are diverse. So many of these ideas have originated from you through our meetings, messages, and contacts. Thank you.

Capitol Visitors: Linda Licht, Lowden; Bill Hammes and his Wilton FFA students: Jacob Kaufmann, Logan Lyon, Andrew Sauer, Katie Brown, Kelsey Graham, and Kayla DeVore; Gary Bruns, Wilton

Listening Post Schedule:

February 9	9 am	West Liberty High School Library
	1 pm	West Branch Public Library
February 16	9 am	Tipton Farm Bureau Office

Please contact me with opinions or questions.

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